

THE WISDOM of GOD

In the *Permission* of SIN,

VINDICATED;

In *Answer* to a late Pamphlet,

Intituled, An A T T E M P T, &c.

By JOSEPH BELLAMY, A.M.

Author of the SERMONS on the WISDOM of
God in the *Permission* of SIN.

HE is the Rock ; his Work is perfect : For all his Ways
are Judgment : a God of Truth, and without Iniquity,
just and right is he. DEUT. xxxii. 4.



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The P R E F A C E.

  F the divine *Conduct* towards the intellectual System can be *vindicated*,
 I  there will be no Room for any
  *Dispute* about his *Decrees*. If God always
does what is *best* for him to do, his *decreeing* from Eternity to do so, cannot be objected against: Unless we can suppose it to be *wrong*, for God to *determine* upon a *Conduct* in all Respects *right*.—All God's Decrees primarily respect his own Conduct. *First*, what a World to create. *Secondly*, how to behave towards his Creatures, in every particular Circumstance. For, “God executeth his Decrees in the Works of Creation and Providence.”—The whole of the divine Conduct towards *intelligent* Beings, after they are brought into Existence, may be arranged under these two general Heads. (1.) What he *does*. (2.) What he *forbears to do*. — For Instance,

Instance, He placed our first Parents in the Garden : he forbid them to eat of the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, on Pain of Death. These Things he *did*. — He did not hinder the Serpent from tempting ; nor our first Parents from eating. These Things he *forbore to do*. — If he always has a good *Reason* for doing what he does, and for forbearing what he forbears ; then his *whole Conduct*, as comprehending both, is *justifiable*. —

To vindicate the Conduct of the Holy One of Israel, was the Design of my *Sermons on the Wisdom of God in the Permission of SIN*. But the Author of the *Attempt* not believing, that God has done so well in this Affair as he might have done, has undertaken to write *against* — Against *whom* ? against *me* ? — no, — rather, to write against his Maker. — For he does not deny the *Fact*, viz. that God *permits Sin*. But endeavours to prove, that God in this, as well as in some other things, has *not* done “ what was most for his own Glory. ” — So that the Design of the following Pages, is not to vindicate *my self*, but to vindicate the GOD that made us all. — I have certainly the *best Side* of the Question ; and
could

could I do Justice to the Subject, I might expect the Approbation of all the Friends of God.—For, as a dutiful Child loves to hear the righteous Cause of his injured Father pleaded ; so does every true Christian, every real Child of God, love to hear the Works and Ways of the holy One of Israel justified. And even when they cannot fully see the *Reasons* of the divine Conduct, they are disposed to believe that he has done *well* ; because he is an absolutely perfect Being, who cannot err.—Nor do I know how to be so uncharitable to the Author of the *Attempt*, as to suppose that he will, on second Thoughts, in good Earnest, abide by what he has published. Rather I hope, his Belief, that “supreme Wisdom *cannot err*,” will finally prevail over his Doubts, that “God does in Fact what is *not* most for *his own Glory*.”

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E R R A T A.

P Age 30. l. 20. read FOR---P. 49. l. 35. r. *Pi-habiroth*--- P. 79. l. 6. r. *rise*----ibid. l. 29. r. *tried*---

Lately Published, and Sold by *S. Kneeland*, in Queen-street.

SIN, thro' Divine Interposition, an Advantage to the Universe; and yet, this is no Excuse for Sin, or Encouragement to it; illustrated and proved: And GOD's Wisdom and Holiness in the Permission of Sin; and that his Will herein is the same with his Revealed Will, shewn and confirmed.

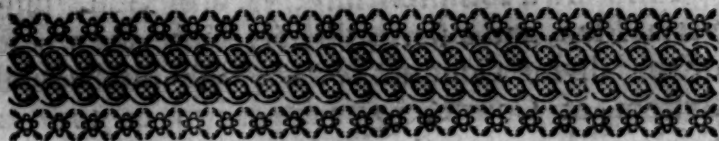
In *three Sermons* from ROM. III. 5,---8. Preach'd at *Sheffield*, January 1759. By *Samuel Hopkins*, A. M.

N. B. These Sermons may be considered as an Appendix to the Rev. Mr. *Bellamy's Discourses on the Wisdom of GOD in the Permission of Sin*, lately published.

And are calculated to shew the Weakness and Absurdity of an anonymous Pamphlet, which has lately made its Appearance, intitled, An ATTEMPT, &c. Being a full Answer to the Substance of said Pamphlet; tho' compos'd and preach'd before that made its Appearance.

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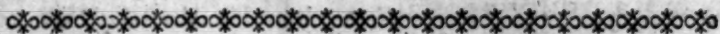




A

VINDICATION

Of the Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin.



The INTRODUCTION.

HAT God permits Sin, is plain Fact, cannot admit of Dispute, and needs no Proof. Or if any should be so weak as to deny the Fact, it may be easily proved. For all acknowledge that Sin is in the World; but if God had interposed, and effectually hindered its ever coming into the World, it never would have been. That he did not interpose and effectually hinder it, is therefore as certain, as that Sin is now in the World. And God's *not hindering* Sin, is what I call his *permitting* it.—And this Fact, *that God permits Sin*, gives Rise to this Question, viz. *Is it wisest and best, that God should conduct as he does in this Affair?*

B

HAD

HAD we a comprehensive View of God's universal Plan, and a perfectly holy Taste, the whole of the divine Conduct towards the intellectual System, of Course, must appear to us now in this World, perfect in Wisdom, Glory & Beauty ; as, it is acknowledged, it will, to all holy Beings at the Day of Judgment. But as the evil and dreadful Consequences of Sin to us at present engross our Attention, and the Good to be bro't out of Evil, how great soever it may be, is almost entirely out of Sight, to be sure, to the Generality of Men ; and not at all suited to please a vicious Taste, were it in ever so clear View ; it is no wonder if it be very difficult to bring a guilty apostate World to think well of the divine Conduct in this Affair. And yet if we once conclude, that the holy One of Israel has not done what is most for his own Glory, nor what was wisest and best to do ; we must inevitably give up the absolute Perfection of the divine Nature,—which will overturn all Religion by the Roots.

To say, “ that *secret Things belong to God*, and “ we ought not to think of this Part of the divine Conduct ; nor is it our Duty to believe “ it to be wise, or to acquiesce in it, as such ; ” will not satisfy a pious, judicious Mind. Indeed, were it a *secret Thing*, and had we no Evidence of the Fact, it might justly put an End to all our Enquiries. But God's permitting Sin is in Truth *no secret Thing*. It is *revealed*, it is as open and manifest as that God made and governs the World. It is often, very often held
up

up to our View in the holy Scriptures, by God himself, on Purpose that we might think of it. And it is acknowledged on all Hands, that it is our Duty to *search the Scriptures*, and take special Notice of what we find written there, and meditate on every Part of the divine Conduct therein held forth to our View; since the whole is calculated and designed for our Instruction. 2 *Tim.* iii. 16.—And as it is an acknowledged Fact, that God has permitted Sin in Millions of Instances, from the Beginning of the World to this Day, and will continue to do so thro' eternal Ages; so there is no avoiding a View of his Conduct, but by the greatest Stupidity, or shutting our Eyes in the most obstinate Manner.—Nay, this will not do it; we cannot but think of it sometimes in this World, and shall for ever think of it in the World to come. And we must approve or disapprove; for it is so interesting an Affair, that we cannot stand Neuter. If we disapprove now, and for ever; we cannot acquiesce in God's Ways in this World, nor join the heavenly Hosts at the Day of Judgment, in saying, *Amen, Hallelujah!* And God, of Necessity, must look upon us as Enemies to him, and Male-Contents in his Kingdom, and treat us accordingly. It is therefore of the last Importance that we approve.—But if God's Conduct is not wise, it is not our Duty to approve of it. Rather we ought to be sorry, and lament, that God has done as he has: Which would suppose him to be to Blame: Which would imply that he is not an absolutely perfect Being. And if

so, he is not God. And if there is no God, all Religion is overthrown. Therefore we must believe the divine Conduct to be wise.—But how shall this Belief be obtained?—*Firstly* and *chiefly* by an implicit Faith in the absolute Perfection of the divine Nature.—Which—*Secondly*, may be strengthened, by a View of the Wisdom of such Parts of the divine Conduct as we can more fully comprehend.—Which—*Thirdly*, may be still more confirmed by right Views of the true Nature of God's universal Plan.—All these I have endeavoured to lead my Readers to attend unto, in my *Sermons on the Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin*.

AND had the Author of the *Attempt* carefully attended to the Subject, as I had stated it, and entered thoroughly into my Reasonings, I should naturally have been led to review the whole, and to retract or confirm, as Light and Truth appeared.—But this he has not done; but rather, to use his own Words, according to his professed Design, he has exerted himself to the utmost to set out the Doctrine, “if possible, in all its Horror & Deformity.” (p. 8.) So that what I have to do, is to take off this *ill Dress*, and array it in its *native Beauty*; that the divine Conduct in the Permission of Sin may not be blasphemed by ignorant and wicked Men thro' his Means; and the moral Rectitude of the divine Nature given up, to the Subversion of all Religion. Nor shall any thing in his Piece that needs an Answer, pass unconsidered.

SECTION

SECTION I.

Several Particulars, wherein the Author of the SERMONS on the Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin, and the Author of the ATTEMPT, are agreed.

WE should always exactly state the Point in Controversy before we begin to dispute. Wherefore let us see how far this Author agrees with us ; that the Point of Difference may be made to stand out in clear View.——And

1. WE agree, that Sin is in the World, and that dreadful have been the Consequences for above 5000 Years : And it is likely to issue in the eternal Ruin of great Multitudes of God's Creatures.

2. WE agree, that Sin is the very worst of Evils in its own Nature, and it naturally tends to evil, and only to evil ; to dishonor God, and ruin the System.

3. WE agree, that the eternal Ruin of such great Multitudes of God's Creatures, consider'd in it's self, is an infinitely dreadful Thing.

4. WE agree, that all the Sin and Misery, that has, or ever will take Place in the System thro' eternal Ages (how infinitely dreadful soever the whole must appear to one who has a perfect comprehensive View of it all at once) even the whole lay open, full and plain to the divine View, before God created the World. And that he had as full, perfect and lively an Apprehension of it, before he began to create, as he ever will have to eternal Ages.

5. WE agree, that, if God had pleased, he could have hindered the Existence of Sin, and caused Misery to have been forever unknown in his Dominions, with as much Ease, as to have suffered Things to take their present Course.

6. WE agree, that God knew with infallible Certainty, that Things would take their present Course, and issue as they will issue, in the eternal Ruin of Millions, unless he himself should interpose, and effectually hinder it.

7. WE agree, that God did, as it were, stand by, and take a perfect View of the whole Chain of Events, in which his Honor & the Good of his Creation was infinitely interested: and in a full View, and under a most lively Sense of the whole, did deliberately forbear to interpose effectually to hinder the Introduction of Sin into his World, when he could have hindered it, as easily as not.

8. WE agree, that Angels and Men were under the greatest Obligations to love and obey God, and were left to their own free Choice: and that God was not obliged, in point of Justice, to do any more for them than he did: And that the whole Blame lies at the Creatures Door: and that God is righteous in punishing his sinning Creatures, according to the Declarations of his Word.—All these Particulars I had asserted:—None of them has he denied:—Nor does it appear that we differ in any of these Things.

SECTION

SECTION II.

The grand Point in Controversy exactly stated.

THE grand Point of Difference is precisely this—"I believe that the infinitely holy and wise God, in every Part of his Conduct, relative to the intellectual System, does that which is really wisest and best for him to do ; most for his Glory and the Good of the System, in the whole ; and therefore, that God's present Plan is, of all possible Plans, the best ; most for his Glory and the Good of the System."—On the Contrary, the Author of the *Attempt* believes, that "God is not obliged to do, and that in fact he does not do, that which is most for his own Glory, or most for the Good of the System ; and is fully perswaded that the present Plan is so far from being the best, that it had been infinitely more for the Glory of God, and Good of the System, if Sin had never happened."

In the Sermons he objects against (p. 104, 105.) it had been said, that "from the Perfections of the divine Nature alone, we have such full Evidence, that he must always act in the wisest and best Manner, as that we ought not in the least to doubt it :—Before the Foundation of the World, this System now in Existence, and all other possible Systems, all equally lay open to the divine View, and one as easy to Almightyness as another : He had his Choice ; he had none to please but himself : Besides
him

“ him there was no Being : he had a perfectly
 “ good Taste, and nothing to bias his Judg-
 “ ment, and was infinite in Wisdom : This he
 “ chose : and this, of all possible Systems, there-
 “ fore was the best, infinite Wisdom and perfect
 “ Rectitude being Judges.”

BUT the Author of the *Attempt* esteems this Reasoning quite inconclusive, as it proceeds on a false Hypothesis. “ A Fallacy,” he says, to suppose that God “ must necessarily always will and do that which is most for his own Glory.” A Point he does not believe, “ that in fact he always does” or that “ he is obliged to.” He thinks it plain in the Works of Creation, that God has not done what would have been most for his own Glory, and that he might have done much better. Which emboldens him to argue, that in the Works of Providence, he did not mean to do his best. (p. 12, 13.) And he attempts to prove at large by 9 Arguments, that it had been much better, in the whole, more for God’s Glory and the general Good of the System, if Sin and Misery had been for ever unknown. (p. 20,—24.)—And if it had been better for God to have hindered Sin, it was not wise in God to permit it.

So that this is the fundamental and most essential Point of Difference, and that on which the whole Controversy, between him and me, turns, viz. *Whether the whole, and every Part of the divine Conduct, be agreeable to infinite Wisdom.*—Or, in other Words, *Whether God means in the whole, and every Part of his Conduct, to do*
that

that which he knows to be for the best, most for his Glory and the Good of the System, on the whole.—

For we both agree, that God always knows what is for the best, and never acts under Mistake.—

So that the only Question really is, *Whether God always means to do, what he knows to be for the best, in the whole?*—

For if he does, the grand Point is proved. The *Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin* is demonstrated.—And it is in vain to raise Objections against that which infinite Wisdom knows to be best.—It is proud & arrogant, 'tis impious and blasphemous, for a Worm of the Dust to take up, and dispute against his Maker. *Isai. xlv. 9. Rom. ix. 20.*

SECTION III.

God, who is a Being of infinite Wisdom and perfect Rectitude, always conducts agreeably to his own most glorious Perfections; that is, in the most wise, holy and perfect Manner. Particularly in this Case.

WE are agreed, that this Affair of the Permission of Sin was an infinitely important Affair. And, indeed, considering it in all its Consequences; there, perhaps, never was a more important Affair, that God ever had to decide. It involved in it the Welfare of the angelic World, & the Welfare of the whole human Race; the Honor of God was infinitely concerned in the Affair; yea, the very Life of God's own Son, did, as it were, lie at Stake: for if Sin was permitted,

mitted, the Son of God was to die. That if God ever thoroughly considered and weighed any Affair whatever, no doubt, he did this.— And if ever he was concerned to act according to his best Judgment (if I may be allowed to use such a Phrase) in any one Case, no doubt he was in this. And if God is an absolutely perfect Being, it was simply impossible, that he should conduct, in this infinitely important Affair, contrary to the Light of his own Mind, and the joint Declaration of all his Perfections, infinitely to his own Dishonor, and infinitely to the Damage of the System, absolutely without any Motive so to do; yea, against infinite Motives to the Contrary. Nay, to suppose, that God would deliberately and voluntarily, absolutely without any Motive, suffer his Creatures, his *own* Creatures, to sin; when he knew it would be, in the whole, infinitely better for him to hinder it; is in the most bare-faced Manner to give up the moral Rectitude of the divine Nature.

DID the Inhabitants of Heaven view the divine Conduct in the Permission of Sin, in this blasphemous Light, and firmly believe God to be such a Being, in Stead of crying, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole Earth is full of his Glory*, as they did when God gave up Israel of old to Blindness of Mind and Hardness of Heart (*Isai. 6.*) They would rather sink down into amazing Grief, and fill all Heaven with loud Lamentations.

AND Saints on Earth, in Stead of singing their ancient melodious Song, *The Lord reigneth, let the*

the Earth rejoyce ; let the Multitude of Isles be glad thereof ; might rather, if these Things were so, with the captive Jews, hang their Harps on the Willows, put on Sackcloth, sit down in Sorrow, and refuse to be comforted.

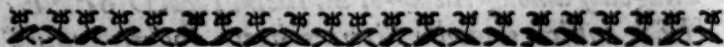
A firm Belief of the infinite Wisdom and perfect Rectitude of the divine Nature and Government, is essential to the very Foundation of all true Religion : For it is the very Reason of our Love to God, of our Joy in him, rejoycing in his universal Government, acquiescing in all his Dispensations, even those which we cannot understand, and of our chearful Obedience to all his Commands. If therefore we give up this Belief, we must give up all Religion : and shall be in as bad or worse Condition than if we believed there were really no God at all.

AND this Doctrine of the Wisdom and Rectitude of the divine Government is also the very Foundation of that Doctrine plainly taught in Scripture, and universally believed by all Christians, viz. That at the Day of Judgment the Righteousness of all God's Ways will be made manifest to all the World, and the Wisdom of all his Conduct cleared up before the intellectual System, to God's everlasting Honor, to the Joy of all holy Beings, and to the eternal Confusion of all God's Enemies. (*Jude 15.*) For then will the Lord come *with ten thousands of his Saints, to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them--of all their* HARD SPEECHES, *which ungodly Sinners have spoken against him.*—But if God's Ways have not in fact been wise

wife and good, they cannot, at the Day of Judgment, when all Things will be bro't to Light, appear to be so. — If God has done wrong (Heaven forbid the Blasphemy!) all the World will know it then. And if God has deliberately and voluntarily acted contrary to his better Judgment, in this infinitely important Affair of the Permission of Sin, absolutely for no good End at all, and absolutely without any Motive, it will then appear before the Eyes of Angels, Men & Devils, to God's eternal Reproach, to the eternal Grief of all his Friends, and to the eternal Triumph of all his Enemies, who will be glad to see the Being, they most of all hate, fall under Blame, as well as themselves.

IF this were the Case, it would be (for aught I can see) more for God's Honor, that there never should be a Day of Judgment, and that the Truth of things never should come to Light. Yea, it had been better if God had never made the World.

AND now does the Author of the *Attempt* in very Deed believe all this horrid Blasphemy; that he should blame me so much, for being so confident, that all God's Conduct is wise and good; and his present Plan, of all possible Plans, the best! For, why should he blame me so much for my Belief, unless he is strong in the Belief of his own Scheme!





*A DIALOGUE between A. the Author
of the ATTEMPT, and B. the Author
of the SERMONS on the Wisdom of
God in the Permission of Sin.*

A. No. I abhor all this Blasphemy with all my Heart. I firmly believe that all the divine Conduct is "good, right, best"---"Right in Matter, Manner and Aim"---the Result of "supreme Wisdom, which cannot err."---But I affirm, that Sin is "no Part of God's Scheme; but a Device of the Devil."---"God's original Scheme was to have all holy and happy."---The Devil has disconcerted it by his Rebellion, and God is heartily grieved.---Did I believe "the present Scheme to be God's, I should "think it extremely dangerous opposing it; and that "it would argue the highest Vanity, Arrogance and "Impiety." (p. 13, 14, 15, 16, 24, &c.)

B. If by "Sin not being God's Scheme, but the Device of the Devil," you mean, that God did not voluntarily permit Sin; but that the Devil brought it in, in Spite of all that God could do to hinder him; why do you maintain, that God did not mean to do, in this Affair, what he knew was *most for his own Glory*? For according to this, God exerted himself to the utmost, to secure his own Glory, and the Good of the System too; and would have obtained his End, had not his almighty Power been overmatch'd by the Devil. This therefore cannot be your Meaning: unless you would be inconsistent with your self.

C.

If

If you only mean, that *the Devil sinned, and not God* ; I grant it. But the Question still remains unanswered. Pray, therefore, tell me, why did the infinitely wise and almighty God permit such a glorious Angel, as Satan once was, ever to devise such Mischief ? ever to perpetrate so shocking a Deed ? a Deed pregnant with infinite and eternal Woes !---Pray, tell me plainly, did God act wisely in this Affair, or did he not ?---He had some End in View, or no End.---Not no End : for that would reflect upon his Wisdom.---If some End, it was a good End, or a bad one.---Not a bad one : for he is a most perfect Being. Therefore it must be a good one. That is, when God determined to permit Sin, upon a full View of the whole Affair, he knew it wisest and best, to permit it---i. e. he knew, that that Plan, in which so much Sin and Misery should take Place, would be better, in the whole, than a Plan in which Sin and Misery should for ever be effectually prevented by his constant Interposition. And if he knew this to be the best Plan, it was doubtless his "original" Plan : for an infinitely wise and perfect Being, who "cannot err," would originally chuse, what, upon the whole, he knew to be the best.†

A. "THIS is what, I conceive, I have a Right, as a Man, and a Christian, to oppose." (p. 4.) It is a mere "Fallacy" to pretend, "that the present Scheme "is most for the Glory of God ; because he must necessarily always will and do that which is most for his own Glory." I think you much to blame for being
so

† This is not a Point peculiar to calvinistic Divines ; but as strongly asserted by Men of Learning in general. "If the Author and Governour of the World be infinitely perfect, then—of all possible Systems he hath chosen the best."—"That is, the System in which the greatest Quantity of Happiness & Perfection obtains, that can in the Nature of things take Place."—"This is the joint Doctrine of Reason and Revelation." Dr. Turnbull, *Chris. Phil.* p. 35, 47.

so "positive." For my Part, I do not believe, "that God does in Fact, or that he is obliged to do, what is most for his declarative Glory." (p. 12, 13.) And I can prove by a Variety of Arguments, that it had been better, infinitely better, infinitely more for the Honor of God, and Good of the System, if Sin had never been. (p. 19, 24)

B. WHAT!--plainly contradict yourself so soon, my Friend!--However,---pray, do give me an Instance, wherein infinite Wisdom ever erred; and wherein God did not do what was on the whole most for his own Glory.

A. IT is plain God might, have made the World much better than he did: And if after he had made the World, he had hindered the Existence of Sin, it had been infinitely more to his Honor, and to the Good of the System. (p. 12, 13. compared with p. 20,---24.)

B. PRAY, how then do you think, the whole of the divine Conduct will appear at the Day of Judgment? If not only his Works of Creation are defective; but if, in this infinitely important Affair of the Permission of Sin, God has done what he knew was not for the best; permitted Sin, when it had been infinitely better, if he had hindered it.

A. I AM of the Opinion, that, at the Day of Judgment, all God's Works and Ways will appear to be good. "Full Day will be then poured on all the Ways and Works of God; to the unspeakable Joy of those, who now heartily acquiesce in the Dispensations of supreme Wisdom; and humbly admire and adore, where they cannot fully comprehend." (p. 31.) For I firmly believe, that all the divine Conduct is the Result of "supreme Wisdom which cannot err." (p. 14.)

B. DEAR Sir, what do you mean?---All the divine Conduct the Result of "supreme Wisdom which cannot

not err."---So that "all his Works and Ways will bear the Light of full Day."---And when brought into the clearest View, will appear to be "the Dispensations of supreme Wisdom," worthy to be "heartily acquiesced in" by all wise and holy Intelligences, with "unspeakable Joy."---Altho' they all will see in the clearest Light, that God has made and governed the World in such a Manner, as he himself knew was not for the best, not most for his Glory, nor most for the Good of the System!---What! will all holy Beings at the Day of Judgment, think it *best*, that God has *not done best!* and *wisest*, that he has *counteracted his Wisdom!*---And *most glorious*, that he should do what he knew was *not most for his Glory*, and for the Good of the System! And humbly "admire and adore" his acting contrary to his own infinite Wisdom, Holiness and Goodness, as firmly believing this was the Result of "supreme Wisdom which cannot err!"---Pray, explain yourself on this Point.

A. WHAT I say, is really true. "Supreme Wisdom cannot err."---"So far as God has been concerned in the Transactions of the System, they must be good, right, best." But "Sin is no Part of God's Scheme, but a Device of the Devil." (p. 14, 16.)

B. VERY well, Sir.---And do I understand you now?---Do you really mean, that God in permitting the Devil and other wicked Beings to do as they do---that God in *this* has done what was indeed "*good, right, best*"?---For if God's Conduct is but approved of (you may condemn the Devil as much as you please) my Point is gained---the *Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin* is acknowledged.--Pray, speak plainly.---

A. INDEED, Sir, "I do doubt, whether God does in Fact, and therefore whether he is obliged to do, what is most for his declarative Glory." (p. 13.) And I do believe, it had been infinitely better if Sin had never been. (p. 20,---24.)

B. WHY

B. WHY then do you profess firmly to believe, that the whole of the divine Conduct "is good, right, best"? And that "supreme Wisdom cannot err"? And that "all the divine Dispositions are to be heartily acquiesced in, as being supremely wise"? (p. 14, 31.) How can these Things be consistent?

HAD you, Sir, justified your Maker, fully acknowledged the *Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin*; and wherein my Solutions of Difficulties appeared to you not sufficient, had you given better; still endeavouring to justify the Ways of God to Men, and to assist the People of God in their Belief of the Wisdom of all the divine Conduct; and so to animate their Love, and quicken their Obedience; you had merited the Thanks of the Public, and the Love of all pious People, and might have been approved of even in Heaven.---But do you think, Almighty GOD will be pleased, to have his Conduct in the Permission of Sin disputed against, and set in the "most horrible, deformed Light possible," by one of his own Subjects, who ought to love him, approve of all his Ways, and plead his Cause, in this revolted World! Or do you expect, that the Friends of God in Heaven or Earth, will be suited with your ATTEMPT, who are all united in believing concerning God, as it is written in *Deut. xxxii. 4. He is the Rock, his Work is perfect: For all his Ways are Judgment: a God of Truth, and without Iniquity, just and right is he!*

A. WHETHER what I have published, is consistent or no, I should be extremely glad of a Reply to my Objections. (p. 30.)

B. A FULL Reply to almost all your Objections has been already given: partly in Mr. *Edwards on Liberty*, partly in My *Sermons on the Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin*, and still more fully in Mr. *Hopkins's Sermons on Rom. iii. 5,---8.* to which you may be referred.

A. BUT there is one Argument, on which I lay great Weight. Yea, on which I build my whole Scheme, viz. that as "God does not in Fact, so he is not obliged to do, what is most for his declarative Glory."---An Argument you have none of you answered. I have expressed it in these Words, viz.

"It is allowed by all, that God is infinite in Power, and that Space is infinite. Now here is evidently Room for endless Displays of divine Glories. In no definite Period of Time ; in no given Quantity of Space, can there be a full Discovery of God's Glories ; because they are absolutely infinite. And therefore may we not with the utmost Safety affirm, there is not now such a Display ? We know there is *now* a greater Display of God's various natural and moral Perfections, than seven thousand Years ago : for there are now Multitudes of rational Beings, which then were not ; and an Infinity of other Objects ; in which are surprising Manifestations of Wisdom, Power and Goodness, &c. Had God been obliged to make as great Displays, as he could, of his Perfections, he must from Eternity have produced into Existence all possible Beings ; the Contrary of which is evident. And may we not be naturally led from this to doubt, whether God has so much Glory from the Things which now exist, as he might have had ? Especially when we consider the obvious Defects and Blemishes there are ; and can easily imagine how these might be corrected by infinite Wisdom." (p. 13.)

B. TRUE, Sir, we have none of us answered this Argument. Nor did we expect it would be used by any in this Country, as I believe it never was before. It has often been used by professed Atheists, in other Countries ; who, from the pretended Defects of the natural World, have argued that it could not be the Work of an absolutely perfect Being ; and so that we have no Evidence that there is such a Being. And

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it has been abundantly answered by some of the most learned Writers in our Nation, in their Attempts to establish the Belief of a God, i. e. of an absolutely perfect Being.

SUFFER me, Sir, to give you two or three short Extracts out of Dr. Cudworth's *intellectual System*, where, writing in Confutation of *Atheism*, he says, "Their first Objection is against Providence, as to the Fabrick of the World, from the Faultiness of the Mundane System, intellectually considered, & in order to Ends ; *quia tantâ stat prædita Culpâ* ; that because it is so ill-made, therefore it could not be by a God. Where the Atheist takes it for granted, that whosoever asserts a God, or a perfect Mind, to be the Original of all Things, does therefore *ipso facto* suppose all Things to be well made ; and as they should be. And this doubtless was the Sense of all the ancient Theologers." (p. 875.)---As in some modern Theists, who pretend to solve the Difficulty by saying, "*quia Deus non tenetur ad optimum*, because God is no where bound or obliged to the best," he shews the Absurdity of their Scheme. p. 873, &c.---In p. 874, he says, "God is---an impartial Ballance---weighing out Heaven & Earth, and all the Things therein, in the most just and exact Proportion, and not a Grain too much or too little of any thing. Nor is the Deity therefore bound or obliged to do the best, in any Way of Servility, much less by the Law and Command of any Superior, but only by the Perfection of its own Nature, which it cannot possibly deviate from, no more than ungod itself. In Conclusion therefore, we acknowledge the Atheists Argument to be thus far good ; that if there be a God, then of Necessity must all Things be well made ; and as they should be ; and vice versa. But no Atheist will ever be able to prove, that either the whole System of the World could have been better made, or that so much as one thing therein is made ineptly."

AND

AND having spent several Pages in answering various Objections of *atheistical* Writers against the Works of *Creation, & Providence*, he concludes the whole (p. 899.) in these Words. "And now having fully *confuted* all the *atheistical* Grounds, we confidently conclude, that---there is one only *necessary Existent*, the Cause of all other Things; and this an absolutely perfect Being, infinitely good, wise, and powerful; who hath made all things that were *fit to be made*, and according to the *best Wisdom*, and exerciseth an exact *Providence* over all." Thus far Dr. *Cudworth*.

AND this doubtless is the Belief of Christian Divines in general, of whatever Denomination. To be sure Dr. *Whitby* is full in it. These are his Words, "As it would be in us an intolerable Piece of Insolence to say, against the plainest Declarations of the *Scripture*, that God did not in Wisdom make the World, because we are not able to discern the Wisdom of all things framed in it; so must it be an equal Insolence in us to say, God doth not act in the preserving it, and in the ordering of Affairs in it, according to the Measures of true Goodness, because we---cannot dive into the Reasons of his Dispositions." See Dr. *Whitby's Discourses*, II^d Edit. p. 495.

To which let me add a short Extract out of Dr. *Turnbull's Christian Philosophy*, p. 35. "The Creation of an all-perfect Mind must be the Image of it's Creator; and therefore it must be perfect, it must be chosen by infinite Wisdom and Goodness as the most perfect System, that is, the System in which the greatest Quantity of Happiness and Perfection obtains, that can in the Nature of things take Place; and this being the Case, all the seeming Imperfections and Evils in it, are such only in a partial View; and with Respect to the whole System they are Goods."

YEA, Mr. *Chubb* himself, tho' justly numbered among *infidel* Writers, had juster Notions of God's moral

ral Character, than to think, that God might do better than he does. These are his Words, "I shall take it for granted, that God is, and that he is necessarily an immense, eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, a self-sufficient, and an unchangeable Being. This being allowed, from hence it will follow, that as God is always capable of doing what is most *worthy* and *valuable*, in it self, and which in the Nature of things, is *right, good, best* and *fittest* to be done, seeing he knows wherein the Goodness, Fitness, and Valuableness of every Action lies: So he *always will act thus*, because right, good, fit, &c. are so very beautiful, and excellent in themselves; and are so preferable, in the Nature of things, to their Contraries, that they always will afford a *proper* and *sufficient Motive*, &c." *Tracts*, p. 252.

BUT to come to a more particular Consideration of your Argument, the grand Argument on which your whole Scheme is built; yea, the only Argument you use, to prove, that God *might* permit Sin, altho' he knew it was not for the best; not most for his Glory, or the Good of the System: and that therefore we can have no Certainty that he *would not*, from the absolute Perfection of his Nature.---And this, in a few Words, is the Sum of it.

GOD in the Work of Creation has not done his best, but might have done infinitely better.---If this be so in one Instance, it may in another.---Therefore we can have no Assurance, from the absolute Perfection of the divine Nature, that God means to do what is best in his Works of Providence; but have Reason to think he might have done infinitely better.

WELL, if it be really so, that God does not mean to order the Affairs of the Universe in the best Manner, I have had too good an Opinion of God, and have put too much Confidence in him. And I must learn for the Time to come to have lower Thoughts of God,

God, and higher Thoughts of my self. I must begin to think my self a suitable Judge, to set up and censure God's Works and Ways, and point out wherein he might have done better; not in the least suspecting, that God is wiser and better than I am, and more able and willing to order Things for the best; or that it favours of Arrogance and Pride, for a Worm of the Dust, to say to the infinitely wise God,----“In *This*, “O Lord, and in *That*, thou mightest have done “better. Had I been at thy right Hand, chief Director, I could have laid a Plan for a better natural “World, and for a better moral System.”---Not once imagining, that God may have wise Reasons for all his Works and all his Ways, which lie beyond my Reach. But rather confident, that he had no good Reason; because I see none. Wherefore I may venture safely to censure, as unwise, any Steps of divine Providence, the Wisdom of which I do not see. And so, the more blind I am to the Wisdom of the divine Ways, the more Faults I may find, and the more fully point out the divine *Errata*.---And so, God must no longer be esteemed as always acting agreeable to infinite Wisdom; because I cannot see it; and, in the Vanity of my Mind, am entered into a Way of thinking and reasoning, that is the Result of the greatest Folly, and pregnant with the grossest Blasphemy.

A MORE particular Answer to your Argument is, Sir, I humbly conceive, really needless. For if I can imagine, to my own Fancy, a better natural World, and a better moral System; yet, as I do not know that my own Imaginations are right I have not the least Reason to call in Question the Wisdom of the divine Conduct; unless I put more Confidence in my Imaginations, than in “supreme Wisdom which cannot err.” But you expressly own, that you “cannot pretend to prove to a Demonstration, that the present Scheme is not the best.” (p. 5.)---And merely because I cannot see the Reason and Wisdom of God's Works
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and Ways, at once, to doubt, whether God has acted so wisely as he might have done, just as if he might not have good Reasons in View, which never entered into my Mind, becomes me, neither "as a Man or a Christian." We, who do not see the whole of God's universal Plan, nay, not the millionth-Part of it, are not in a Capacity to pronounce it a bad Plan. It becomes us rather to put an implicit Faith in the divine Wisdom; and to believe it to be good, because it is God's.---I a little wonder, Sir, how you dare so freely censure the Works and Ways of God, your Maker and final Judge!

A. "COULD it be made appear, that the present Scheme is God's, I readily own it would be extremely dangerous opposing it: And argue the highest Vanity, Arrogance and Impiety." (p. 13, 14.)

B. VERY well, Sir, and don't you know that the natural World is wholly the Work of God? God, and God alone was the Creator of the Universe. The Devil had no Hand in the Work of Creation. And yet, here you *oppose*, "dangerous" as it is. Yea, here you *begin* your *Opposition*. Here you discover such *Defects* and *Blemishes*, and can easily imagine how things might have been better done; the World might have been created much sooner and larger; and, it seems, you think, infinitely better in the whole; infinitely more to the Glory of God, and containing infinitely more Happiness.---So that, for aught appears, you have near or quite as low an Opinion of the natural, as of the moral World; and could mend the one, as easily as the other.---Yea, from God's not any more consulting his own Glory in the Works of Creation, you are led to doubt whether he has consulted it, so much as he might have done, in the Works of Providence.

BUT this arguing, you see, is directly and professedly against God's Works, and that considered as such. And yet you say, "If it could be made appear, that
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“ the present Scheme is *God's*, it would be indeed extremely dangerous opposing it.” But let the Danger be greater or less, you have ventured to *oppose*, and censure the Works of Creation, which you own to be *God's* Work. Yea, and finding the Works of Creation so little to the Glory of God, to what they might have been ; you are induced to doubt, whether God means always to do that which he knows would be most for his own Glory. And from this grow bold to think, that God might, consistent with his Perfections, permit Sin (a thing he has done not merely once, but persisted in every Day, Hour and Moment, near six thousand Years, in almost an infinite Number of Instances) when he knew, that in the whole, it would have been infinitely more to his Honour and the Good of the System, if he had hindered it.---And so, at last, really give up the moral Character of the Deity.---For, it is capable of strict Demonstration, that infinite Wisdom cannot err. Find *one Error* therefore in all God's Works, and it will prove to a Demonstration, that he is not infinitely wise. Much more, if you find an *Error infinitely great, and persisted in for almost six thousand Years.*

A. SIR, I proposed this “ with the greatest Humility.” (p. 13.)

B. PRAY, but how does it look, to make a *Proposal* “ with the greatest Humility,” which is of such a Nature, as that the *Proposer* himself, at the same Time, is obliged to own, must argue “ the greatest Vanity, Arrogance and Impiety !”---And then by the mere Strength of such a Proposal, to attempt to overthrow the Wisdom of God's universal Plan, even to the Ruin of the moral Character of the Holy ONE of Israel !

IF, to all this, you should reply, “ This Way of Reasoning does not convince me. I cannot believe, “ a Work is done in the wisest and best Manner, and “ most for God's Glory, merely because *God has done it.* If it is arrogant and impious to object, yet I “ feel

“feel inclined to object, and must do it.---I DO
 “DOUBT, WHETHER GOD ALWAYS DOES
 “IN FACT, AND THEREFORE WHETHER
 “HE IS OBLIGED TO DO, WHAT IS MOST
 “FOR HIS DECLARATIVE GLORY.”---I say,
 if you should make this Reply, pray suffer me, with-
 out Offence, to desire you to read *Isai. xlv. 9. Wo*
unto him that striveth with his Maker. Let the Potsberd
strive with the Potsberds of the Earth.---It may do, some-
 times, my Friend, for Worms of the Dust to find
 Fault with the Works and Ways of their Fellow-
 worms ; but it is “extremely dangerous,” to find Fault
 with the Works and Ways of the GREAT JEHO-
 VAH.----- Besides,

You often insist, “that we should acquiesce in that
 Account of things we have in Scripture.” But the
 Scripture no where leads us to think, that God, in
 the Works of Creation or Providence, ever does
 “what is not most for his own Glory”: but every
 where to the Contrary. Yea, we ourselves are re-
 quired, “whether we eat or drink, or whatever we
 do, to do all to the Glory of God.” And can we at
 the same Time imagine, that God allows himself, in
 the most important Affairs, to do “what is not most
 for his own Glory”? Would God have us aim at his
 Glory more than he himself does?---Besides, the
 Scriptures inform us, that when God had finished the
 Work of Creation, and surveyed the whole, he pro-
 nounced it all to be “very good ;” notwithstanding
 all the Objections you have to make against it. And
 the pious Psalmist cries out, *O Lord, how manifold are*
thy Works ! In Wisdom hast thou made them all. Psal.
civ. 24.

A. BUT why did not God “from Eternity produce
 “into Existence all possible Beings?” Would not
 this have displayed his Perfections more fully and to
 better Advantage? (p. 13.)

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B. Is

B. Is there not an Absurdity in the Notion of *creating from Eternity* ? Yea, does it not imply a Contradiction, very evidently, to say, that any Being might have been brought into Existence from Eternity ? For if it was from Eternity, it was *always* in Existence ; and so could never have been brought into Existence.

A. I DID not mean strictly “from Eternity.” But there is no “Period of Time” can be mentioned, in which, God might not have created the Universe. (p. 13.)

B. ACCORDING to Scripture, *In the Beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth.*---Then TIME began.---Strictly speaking, there was no Time before --- Nothing but *Eternity*.-----

BUT you will say, *God might have created the World SOONER.*

“SOONER”!---Pray, in what Sense ?---Not *nearer the beginning of Eternity*. For Eternity never had a Beginning.---Not *so soon*, but it might happen, that the World should be just as old as it is now, when it was no older.---Not *so soon*, but that the Inhabitants of the Earth, about five or six thousand Years after the Creation, might, with as fair Shew of Reason as can now be pretended by any, object and say, *Why was not the World created SOONER ?*---Not *so soon*, therefore, as to obviate this Difficulty, any better than it is at present.

A. BUT God might have brought “all possible Beings” into Existence at once ; which would have given a greater Display of his Perfections. (p. 13.)

B. I BELIEVE, that God knew exactly how large it was *best* to create the Universe ; and in what Order to bring Beings into Existence, so as in the *wisest* Manner to answer the *best* Ends. And I believe, he created it exactly to *his Mind* : For he meant to please himself.

himself. *Rev. iv. 11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory, Honor, and Power : For thou hast created all Things, and for THY PLEASURE they are, and WERE CREATED.*

AND how know we, dear Sir, if God thinks best to have a larger Number of Intelligences to behold his Glory, and be happy in him; but that he judges it best not to bring them into Existence, till the present "Grand Drama" shall be finished, at the Day of Judgment ? That they may, without sharing the Hazard of the present confused State of Things, reap the Benefit of the whole; thro' eternal Ages ; while Angels and Saints may be appointed their Instructors, to lead them into the Knowledge of all God's Ways to his Creatures, and of all their Ways to him, from the Time of Satan's Revolt in Heaven, to the final Consummation of all Things. And so, as the Jewish Dispensation was introductory and preparatory to the Christian ; so this present Universe may be introductory and preparatory to one, after the Day of Judgment, almost infinitely larger.* That this will

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* If the divine Conduct, on the present Plan, is perfect in Wisdom, Glory and Beauty ; then the present Plan may be a good Introduction to as many future Systems, as God pleases : till the whole Sum of Good is raised to the highest possible Degree.—Or rather the Knowledge, Humility, Holiness and Happiness of finite Intelligences may continually augment, with the greatest Celerity, thro' eternal Ages ; while System after System comes into Existence under the best possible Advantages for the swiftest Progress in all divine Improvements.—But if God has mis'd it in the beginning of his Works, there is a Foundation laid for ill Thoughts of him to be handed down to all succeeding Systems thro' eternal Ages, if any such should ever be : And the Damage of what is past can never be repaired, to Eternity.—If our Author's Hypothesis

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be the Case, I don't pretend so much as to conjecture. But I firmly believe, that what is best, in the whole, That infinite Wisdom always has done, and always will do.---And here I rest.

I WILL only add, that the Death of Christ, and the Work of our Redemption, gives a Display of the divine Perfections, infinitely fuller; and shews *what God is*, in an infinitely clearer and brighter Manner, than the Creation of Systems.---It is a small thing with the *Almighty* to create Worlds; a Work scarce worth our Notice, or worthy ever to be thought of, compared with the Work of Redemption by the Death of his Son. To be sure, God himself, who is infinitely the best Judge, views Things in this Light.---*For behold!* (saith the Lord, speaking of this very thing) *I create new Heavens, and a new Earth: And the former shall not be remembered, nor come into Mind.* Isai. lxv. 17.

THE SON of God only spake a Word, and the *old Creation* came into Being: an easy Work! But for the *new Creation*, all his Glory must be laid aside, he must put on the form of a Servant, groan in the Garden, and die on the Cross! And as his thus dying was a Work infinitely greater, than speaking a Word; so the *new Creation* will be proportionably more glorious than the *old*. As it is written, *For behold, I create new Heavens, and a new Earth: And the former shall not be remembered, nor come into Mind.*---But this greatest and most glorious of [all God's Works, could never have been, had God interposed and prevented the Existence of Sin.---Did you, Sir, view the Work of Redemption in the Light of Scripture, surely it must give you

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thesis is true, it seems as if it would be a Pity any more Worlds should ever be created, to come to the Knowledge of their Maker's Dishonour.—Yea, a Pity the present System ever came into Being.

a different Idea of God's universal Plan. Nor could you, if you love what God loves, think so meanly of that, which to God appears so infinitely glorious.

A. BUT I have many Arguments to prove, that it had been infinitely better, infinitely more to the Honour of God, and Good of the System, if Sin had never been. Yet it is plain Fact God has permitted Sin to be. Therefore it is certain, God does not always mean to do that which is best. (p. 13. compared with p. 19,---24.)

B. HOWEVER, according to your own Concession, all your Arguments do not amount to a Demonstration. For you say, "that you cannot pretend to prove to a Demonstration, that the present Scheme is not the best." (p. 5.) But we may be as certain, that infinite Wisdom and perfect Rectitude cannot err, as that *two* and *two* make *four*. Now to attempt to confute, what we are certain to a Demonstration is true, by Arguments, we are sensible, fall short of Demonstration, is very weak. And to give up the infinite Wisdom and perfect Rectitude of the divine Nature and Conduct, on such Grounds, how can it be but inexcusable Impiety?---To censure the Conduct of Civil Rulers, known to be Men of superior Abilities, and of great Integrity, when we are not under Advantages to enter into the Secrets of State, or to know scarce any of the Reasons they act upon, is always deemed arrogant and wicked. Much more must it be so here: As we have the greatest Certainty, that the supreme Ruler of the Universe is a Being of infinite Understanding, and of perfect Rectitude; and as we are at an infinite Remove from a full Comprehension of his grand universal Scheme.

A. I GRANT, this Reasoning looks plausible, and that "some pious conscientious Persons may have been induced to believe" the Wisdom of God in the

Permission of Sin, by it. (p. 25.)---But it does not convince me.---For if once I should believe, that it was wisest and best in God to permit Sin, most for his Glory, and for the Good of the System ; I should feel my self under a Necessity to look upon Sin as being *in its own Nature* a good Thing, for the Glory of God, and Good of the System ; and that God delights in it as such. And that therefore in Stead of hating Sin, mourning for it in our selves, lamenting it in others ; we ought rather to esteem it as really a good and virtuous Thing ; and as such to rejoyce in it, and even to keep an everlasting Jubilee in Remembrance of Satan's Revolt, and Adam's Fall : Events so infinitely glorious ! (p. 16, 17, 18, 19.)---Absurdities so shocking, that I never can believe them.

B. AND, *Absurdities*, let me tell you, that if you did but understand the Scheme you are opposing, you would know, are so far from following from it, that they are absolutely inconsistent with it.

FOR the Doctrine of the Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin, supposes Sin, in it self and in all its natural Tendencies, to be infinitely evil, infinitely contrary to the Honour of God, and Good of the System. For herein consists the Wisdom of God in the Affair, not in bringing Good out of Good, but in bringing infinite Good out of infinite Evil, and never suffering one Sin to happen in all his Dominions, but which, notwithstanding its infinitely evil Nature and Tendency, infinite Wisdom can and will over-rule to greater Good, in the whole. So that all these Objections are the Result of Ignorance or Perverseness.

FOR Sin, in itself, and its natural Tendencies, being just as evil as thò God never meant to, and in fact never did, bring any Good out of it ; it is as much, to be hated for its evil Nature and Tendency, to be
repented

repented of in ourselves, and lamented in others, mourned for, watched and prayed and preached against; as if no Good was ever to be brought out of it.

Just as it was in the Affair of Joseph. It was a vile, an impious and barbarous thing, for his Brethren to do as they did: Hateful in itself, and in the Eyes of God, and of all good Beings: And to be mourned for, and lamented, and testified against, as such. It was dishonorable to God, whose Authority they despised, and whose Design to advance Joseph they intended to frustrate: Cruel to their aged pious Father, and barbarous to their Brother.---And in fact *they were verily Guilty*; as their Consciences testified, in the Day of their Distress. (*Gen. xlii. 21.*) --And if after all this, contrary to their Intentions, great Good comes out of this Affair, no Thanks to them for that. They were still *verily Guilty*; and even every Whit as much to blame, as ever; and had as great Reason for godly Sorrow, and true Repentance; as is plain to the weakest Capacity.---I appeal to the common Sense of all Mankind. *

A. SIR,

* In *Gen. xlv. 5.* Joseph speaking to his Brethren, says, *Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with your selves, that ye sold me hither: For God did send me before you to preserve Life.*—Which POOL thus explains.---“ *Be not grieved, to wit, immoderately,* “ &c. He doth not dissuade them from godly Sorrow.—“ *Nor angry with your selves.* In the Hebrew it is, “ *Neither let there be Anger in your Eyes.* i. e. Neither “ excessively torment your selves with the Remembrance “ of the Fact, neither break forth into Contentions and “ Wrath, and Upbraidings of one another.—*For God* “ *did send me before you to preserve Life.* i. e. God by his “ wise, powerful, and gracious Providence over-ruled “ your evil Intentions to an happy End, &c. which tho “ it doth not lessen your Sin, yet ought to qualify your “ Sorrow.” See POOL on the Place.

N. B.

A. SIR, I am of another Opinion. I affirm, that
 “if Sin is the Occasion of greater Good, in the whole,
 there is no Reason to repent of it.” (p. 18.) “For
 it ceases to be Sin.” (p. 19.)

B. YOU

N. B. JOSEPH’S Brethren had been for some Time in external Circumstances very distressing; their Minds full of Heaviness and Grief from that Quarter; and they ready sometimes in their Anguish to be angry at, and upbraid one another, for what was past. Which kind of Grief was not of the Nature of godly Sorrow. And this was what Joseph referred to. He would not have them grieve and afflict themselves, &c. in that Sort; for that all was brought to a happy Issue. He did not mean to dissuade them from godly Sorrow. He knew, the more they saw of the Wildom, Holiness and Goodness of God in this Affair, the more would they love him, and loath themselves; and mourn after a godly Sort, that they had endeavoured to counteract him. The more Beauty they saw in God’s Scheme, the more would they hate their own, which was designed to frustrate his.

God’s Scheme was to advance Joseph, &c. Their proud Hearts could not endure it. They viewed him as having a native Tincture of Vanity. They envied him, and wanted to keep him down; and laid a Scheme for it; which God over-ruled, directly contrary to their very Hearts.—Now for them to look upon God’s Scheme as glorious, must imply in its very Nature, that they looked upon their own Scheme with the utmost Abhorrence. Which must suppose deep Humiliation, and sincere Repentence. They could not really and heartily like God’s Scheme, without a sincere Abhorrence of their own. Nor can any one Being in the System heartily like God’s Scheme in permitting Sin in general, without a sincere Abhorrence of Sin in general: and a hearty Desire that all sinful Schemes may be frustrated, just as this was, which Joseph’s Brethren had laid; for this is God’s Design.—Had Joseph’s Brethren, before they were soundly humbled, been let into God’s Scheme, to see what he had

B. You affirm so, it is true : But it is impossible, if you will consider the Case, that you should believe so.---Pray, tell me, was it not a sinful thing, for Joseph's Brethren to sell their Brother ? Or for the Jews to crucify the Lord of Glory ? Because God, in both Cases, contrary to their Design, brought great Good out of these great Evils.---I appeal to your own Conscience.

A. NAY, but if you appeal to me, I must frankly tell you, that if greater Good is brought out of Evil, we are not to be sorry, but rather to rejoyce that we have sinned. This Principle I take for granted, as self-evident. And on this Hypothesis I build my Reasoning. (p. 17, 18.)

B. THEN it seems, you think, that Joseph's Brethren had no Cause to repent of their Sin, in attempting to frustrate God's Design to advance their Brother ; because in Spite of all their Malice and Envy, God over-ruled all they did to bring about his designed Advancement, to the best Advantage. Their Sin, you say, " God in infinite Wisdom over-ruled " for the Advancement of Joseph ; the Preservation
" of

had done to advance their Brother, their Envy would have revived ; and they felt an Inclination to lay some new Scheme to take him down. They must be soundly humbled, before they would heartily approve God's Scheme, and be willing to bow to Joseph. But let their proud Hearts be humbled, and they love their Brother as they ought ; and they would be glad to see him exalted, and ashamed to think of what they had done, and cheerfully pay him the Honour which was his due.—So a perfectly humble and holy Temper would lead us perfectly to acquiesce in God's universal Plan, which is designed to exalt God, and make all his happy Subjects feel their comparative Nothingness, to the highest possible Degree—That *God may be all in all.*—See this illustrated at large in my *Sermons*.

“ of Jacob and his Family ; and a Train of the most
 “ happy Events to the Church of God, from that
 “ Day to this.” (p.6.) To which you add, “ It must
 “ be confessed, much of the divine Power, Wisdom,
 “ Goodness, &c. was displayed in bringing so much
 “ Good from such Treachery.” Therefore Joseph’s
 Brethren ought, in Stead of Sorrow, rather to “ keep
 an everlasting Jubilee” in Remembrance of their Malice,
 Envy, Cruelty and Impiety exercised in that Deed.
 This is one of the “ pernicious Consequences” not of
 mine, but of your own Scheme. Nor can it be got
 rid of, as to those Instances of Sin, which you acknow-
 ledge God has over-ruled to greater Good. And as
 you own “ you cannot prove to a Demonstration”
 but that greater Good will finally be brought out
 of all Sin, in general ; so upon your Scheme you can-
 not be certain, that you or any other Sinner has Reason
 to repent of Sin. You do not know as yet, whe-
 ther to be sorry, or glad. Yea, according to you,
 “ it is above your, or perhaps any human Talents”
 to decide this Question. (p. 5,6.) Therefore upon
 your Scheme, all Sinners must put off their Repen-
 tance, until by some new Revelation from Heaven it
 is declared, that God never will over-rule all to greater
 Good. And as soon as ever we are assured, that God
 does not intend to over-rule all Things to his Glory
 and to the Good of the System ; then, and not till then,
 must we begin to be sorry that we have sinned : --that
 is, to be sorry that we have not sought the Glory of
 God and Good of the System, with all our Might. ---
 But why should we be sorry now ? For, if God does
 not seek his own Glory, why should we ? if He does
 not aim at the general Good, why should we ? ought
 we to be more holy than God himself ? No : the
 utmost Extent of our Duty is only *to be perfect, as our
 Father which is in Heaven, is perfect.* --- So that finally,
 your Scheme, in whatever Light considered, will ex-
 clude true Repentance out of the World:---However,
 there

there is this Comfort by the way, that your Scheme is so plainly inconsistent with common Sense, that it can never be believed by a rational Creature. To suppose, that my Sin is lessened, because, contrary to my Design, Good is brought of it by another Being, let the Good be ever so great, instead of being self-evidently true, is really self-evidently false.

A. "CAN that be evil, which exactly coincides with the divine Will?" (p. 19.)

B. The Jews did nothing, but what God's *Counsel determined before to be done*; as the Apostles, full of the holy Ghost, expressly declare, and that even in their Prayer to God. (*Act. iv. 28.*) And they tell the Jews in so many Words, *Him, being delivered by the determinate Counsel and Fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by WICKED Hands have crucified & slain.* (*Act. ii. 23.*) Which very Doctrine the Spirit of God set home on the Consciences of their Hearers, and they were *pricked at the Heart*, in a Sense of their Sin and Guilt; and cry, *What shall we do?* and the Apostles call upon them to *Repent*. But do you, Sir, verily think, that the holy Spirit, these divinely inspired Apostles, and their Converts, were all inconsistent with themselves! and will you contradict the Spirit of God, the Apostles, the primitive Converts, and the universal Sense of Mankind, rather than not oppose the Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin!

A. "How an infinitely holy Being could lay a Plan, which was infinitely wrong and wicked to execute;" I cannot conceive. (p. 16.)

B. You will doubtless readily own, that the following Plan was laid by "an infinitely holy Being:" because you have it from his own Mouth. *Exod. xiv. 1, 2, 3, 4. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the Children of Israel; that they turn, and encamp before Pi-bahiroth, between Migdol and the Sea, over against*

against Baal-Zephon : before it shall ye encamp by the Sea.---
 But why ? --- *For (says the holy One of Israel, who knew what the Consequence would be) Pharaoh--when he hears where you are encamped --- will say of the Children of Israel, They are entangled in the Land, the Wildernejss hath shut them in---* They cannot escape : I have them at my Mercy.---*And I will --- by this Circumstance--- harden Pharaoh's Heart, that he shall follow after them, and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his Host : that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord. ----* Here was a Plan laid by an infinitely holy Being, which was infinitely wrong and wicked for Pharaoh to execute." However, he did execute it.--
Ver. 5. And it was told the King of Egypt, that the People fled : and the Heart of Pharaoh and of his Servants was turned against the People, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us ? And he made ready his Chariot and took his People with him.---
 And what was the issue ? *They sank like Lead in the mighty Waters.* And Israel sang, *The Lord hath triumphed gloriously.---* And thus God ordered Things as he did, professedly on Design, that Pharaoh might do as he did. And when he had done what God intended he should do, he wrought a Miracle to destroy him. And Moses without the least Difficulty, saw the Holiness and Wisdom of God in laying this Plan, and the Wickedness of that bloody Tyrant in executing it, and the Righteousness of his Destruction.

So again, the whole Plan of Christ's Crucifixion was laid by the holy ONE of Israel, before the World began ; and was so very particularly described in the Types and Prophecies of the old Testament, some Hundreds of Years before it was accomplished ; and so plainly foretold by our Saviour before his Death, and compared with the ancient Types and Prophecies after his Resurrection, that the Apostles plainly saw, that Jews and Gentiles had done nothing but what God had before determined should be done : and yet

yet they could easily see, that this did not in the least Measure lessen their Guilt. And so can anyBody else. For it is plain, that the Jews did not mean to accomplish the glorious Scheme, which God had in View, in the Death of his Son; but only to gratify their Pride, Malice, Envy and Revenge, in the Death of One whom they hated, without a Cause.

A. BUT if God is perfectly pleased with his own Plan, why is he not perfectly pleased with wicked Men for executing of it? (p. 7, 8. Marg.)

B. THUS saith the Lord in *Isai. x. 5, 6.* *O Assyrian, the Rod of mine Anger, and the Staff in their Hand is mine Indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical Nation; and against the People of my Wrath will I give him a Charge, to take the Spoil, and to take the Prey, to tread them down like the Mire of the Streets.* This was God's Plan, and it was perfectly agreeable to him, and the Assyrians executed it thoroughly in the Destruction of the Kingdom of Israel, a few Years after. (2 Kin. xvii.)--- But was God pleased with the Assyrians for what they did? No; so far from it, that He devoted them to Destruction therefor. (*Isai. x. 12.*)--- But why? Because they did not mean to serve God, but only to gratify their own Lusts. *ver. 7. He meaneth not so, neither doth his Heart think so: but it is in his Heart to destroy, and to cut off Nations not a few.*

A. BUT "it is certainly most for God's Glory, " that those Things should be done, which when " done, most advance his Glory: for had they been " neglected, some Things most for his Glory would " have been neglected:" Therefore all the Sin, that ever was or ever will be, " is best" on this Scheme; " most for God's Glory, and most for the Happiness of the Creation in general." (p. 26.)

B. As to wicked Men, as has been said, they mean not so, neither doth their Heart think so. They are
E Enemies

Enemies to God and to his Glory, and aim only to gratify their Corruptions. But as to God, it is true, as it is written in *Psal. lxxvi. 10. The Wrath of Man shall praise thee ; and the Remainder of Wrath shalt thou restrain.* All the Sin, that has been or ever will be, God will turn to his Glory. Nor will he ever suffer any one Sin to be committed, but what, he sees with absolute Certainty, is best to permit in this View. And this is so far from reflecting upon God's Holiness, that it is the only way to vindicate his Conduct. And while you oppose this, you are obliged to say, that "in Fact God does not do that which is most for his Glory."

A. Can a Crime which is "infinitely to God's Dishonour, be infinitely to his Honour?" (p. 26.)

B. GOD can bring infinite Honour to himself out of such Crimes, as in their own Nature are infinitely dishonourable to him ; as you your self will not deny. (p. 6.)

A. WELL, if this be so, the more Sin, the better. (p. 28, 29.)

B. I hope you have not forgot the Doom St. Paul gives those who say, *Let us do Evil, that Good may come* : viz. that their *Damnation is just*, Rom. iii. 8.

A. BUT upon your Scheme "all Sinners do sincerely seek the Glory of God in the Gratification of their Lusts : and so, they are all good Men, and will be saved." (p. 29.)

B. THAT is, Because God intended to glorify himself by all *Pharaoh's* Haughtiness ; therefore *Pharaoh* himself, when he bid Defiance to the God of the Hebrews, sincerely sought the Glory of God ; and so was a good Man, and is gone to Heaven ! -- Do you really believe this ! or do you mean to banter, on so serious and grave a Subject !

A. I

A. I believe "your Scheme will encourage Wickedness: and your Libertine young Gentlemen will be extremely obliged to you for a Scheme so favourable to their Indulgences." (p. 28.)

B. No, Sir, by no Means. For it is a Prospect of Success, that encourages Men to Action. This encouraged *Joseph's* Brethren to sell their Brother; they hoped to prevent his Advancement: and this encouraged *Pharaoh* to try his Strength with the God of the Hebrews: he hoped to conquer at last. Had they in both Cases foreknown how Things would have issued, they would have had no Courage to do as they did. But my Scheme is, that all Sinners will, sooner or later, be disappointed, as much as they were: And all their wicked Schemes and Conduct be overruled to answer Ends as contrary to their Intentions: therefore were my Scheme universally believed *with all the Heart*, it would put an everlasting End to all the Courage of all wicked Beings in the whole System.--- Pray, Sir, put it to your own Case. Would you be encouraged to write against *the Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin* once more; if you knew that God would over-rule it, to confirm the Doctrine, and bring you to Shame in the Sight of all the Country? that is, Is a Certainty of compleat Disappointment, the great Encouragement to Action?

A. BUT if God thinks it for the best, that Sin should be, why does he forbid it, and take so much pains to hinder it? (p. 27.)

B. ASK *Moses*, if God thought it best to suffer *Pharaoh* to refuse to let Israel go, why did God send him, so often, to say to *Pharaoh*, in the Name of the Lord, *Let Israel go, that he may serve me?* --- Or, rather, as your Question most immediately reflects upon the holy Majesty of Heaven and Earth, whom you implicitly charge with inconsistent Conduct, if you have Courage, ask him. --- Or, rather, recall your

Question, as it is so plain a Case, that in the whole of that Affair God's Conduct was perfectly consistent. For, by the whole, God meant, to let it be *known that he was the LORD, and to fill the whole Earth with his Glory.* Which End was answered, by all the Methods he took to make *Pharaoh* sensible of his Duty, and by his leaving him after all, to harden his Heart, and act against the clearest Light ; whereby he was prepared for so remarkable a Destruction ; in which God *shewed his Power, and caused his Name to be declared throughout all the Earth.*

A. BUT can you forbid your Child to do a Thing, and then stand by and permit it to transgress, consistently with your self ? (p. 16.)

B. PARENTS and Tutors and Masters often do so ; that while they catch their Children, or Pupils, or Servants, at their bad Tricks, they may be under the better Advantages to convict and reform them ; and so have one and the same End in forbidding and in permitting : And Children of four Years old are able to see the Consistence of such Conduct.

JOSEPH's Brethren were very proud and very envious : this prompted them to sell their Brother. God hated their Pride and Envy. God intended to reform them. God suffered them to exercise and gratify their Pride and Envy in selling their Brother, and then over-ruled this their Wickedness, so as greatly to humble them.--- *They bow to their Brother.* Yea, they are *glad to bow to him, and pay him Honour.*--- And all this was, in God, perfectly consistent, and perfectly wise.

A. BUT "this is making God do Evil, that Good may come of it." (p. 17.)

B. No, Sir, not unless it is "doing Evil," for God to act in the wisest and most perfect Manner : i. e. not unless you *call Good, Evil ; and Evil, Good.* And I leave it to the impartial World, which Scheme makes
God

God the "Author of Sin": That which supposes that he always acts according to his infinite Wisdom and perfect Rectitude, and does what he infallibly knows is most for his Glory and the Good of the System; Or that, which supposes just the contrary, viz. "that in Fact God does not do what is most for his own Glory." (p. 13.) Pray, read *Isai. v. 20.* *

A. BUT "if Obedience had not been, upon the whole, for the best, a perfect Being could not have enjoined it." (p. 20.)

B. The very best things we can aim at, are the Glory of God, and the Good of the System: and the only way we can take, that we may actively promote these Ends is to do as God has bid us: *Love the Lord with all our Heart, and our Neighbour as our selves.* There-

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fore

* If God has wise, holy and good Ends in the Permission of Sin, then he is charged with being "the Author of Sin." And if he has no good End in the Permission of Sin, then he does what he knows is "not most for his own Glory." And this is the Case with respect to every Sin, that ever was or will be committed, by Men or Devils. So that according to this Writer, God is the greatest Sinner in the Universe. For either he is "the Author of all Sin"; or, which is no better, acts contrary to his best Judgment in the Permission of every Sin that is committed: doing what he knows is "not most for his own Glory." Mean while the Devil is represented as the greatest Saint: as one who has done most for the Advancement of God's Glory, and Good of the Universe. (p. 17.) The Sins of all wicked Beings he puts to God's Account. He is the "Author of all." And the Good which God brings out of all, is put to their Account. So God must answer for all the Sin, and the Devil and his Adherents have the Praise of all the Good, in the Universe. And all this is to set the Scripture Doctrine of the Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin, "in the most horrible and deformed Light possible."

fore God, the most perfect Being, may well enjoin this upon us. About all this there is no Dispute.--- The only Question is, What is wisest and best *for God to do*? To interpose and prevent Sin, in all Cases? or else, in some Cases, to suffer his Creatures to sin?-- If God can promote the Glory of God and Good of the System, to better Advantage, by the Permission of Sin, than by hindering it by his own Interposition; it is best, in the whole, for him to permit it. As in the Case of *Joseph, Pharaoh, and Christ's Crucifixion, &c. &c.*--- God could have sent more than twelve Legions of Angels, and rescued Christ out of the Hands of his Enemies; as is plainly intimated in *Mat. xxvi. 53, 54. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve Legions of Angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?*— This would have disconcerted the infinitely wise Plan, which God had laid in the Days of Eternity; of which he had given Intimations in the sacred Writings of the old Testament. *

A. But

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- * The Reason our Saviour did not desire his Father to interpose and effectually hinder that horrid Sin the Jews were now about to commit, is very remarkable, and worthy our attentive Consideration.—It was not because God did not know they would commit that Sin, if left to themselves:—nor because God could not hinder them:—nor because they would cease to be moral Agents, if hindered:—nor because Interpositions are inconsistent with the established Laws of Nature, and the Good of the whole in that Respect (according to *Ramsay, or Clark, or Turnbull, learned and ingenious Writers*)—Nor because it was not God's original Scheme, that Christ should be put to Death; but a Device of the Devil, which God thought himself not concerned to hinder, altho he knew his permitting of it would not be most to his own Glory

A. BUT "God, at first, made all rational Beings
" perfect in Holiness, and perfect in Happiness ;
" which, with me, is a satisfactory Evidence, that
" such a State was most for his Glory and their Hap-
" piness." (p. 24.)

B. ALL the Evidence you can have, merely from
this Fact, must depend upon the Truth of this Pro-
position, viz. that " God always does what is most
for his own Glory and the Good of the Creation."
And if this Proposition is true, it will equally prove,
both, that it was best God should " create all ratio-
nal Beings perfect in Holiness," as he did at first ;
and that he should permit some of them to fall, as
he did afterwards.—I believe the Proposition to be
true :

Glory (according to the new Scheme of our Author)—
But because it was inconsistent with God's original, in-
finitely wise, holy and glorious Plan, which had subsisted
in his own Mind from Eternity, and which he had re-
vealed in his own Word : as his Son, from his Bosom,
who could not be mistaken in this thing, told the Jews.
*How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must
be ?* It would have disconcerted God's Scheme, to have
sent *twelve Legions of Angels*, and hindered the Execution
of this wicked Design. For God had *before determined*
it should be accomplished. (*AE. iv. 27, 28.*) Therefore
when the Time came for it's Accomplishment, God per-
mitted the Jews to take their own Course : i. e. he did
not hinder them, as he easily could have done. For he
knew, it was not best to hinder them : neither most for
his Glory, nor for the Good of the System. And I am
persuaded that even our Author, himself, will not ven-
ture to say, " I do doubt whether in *this* God did what
was most for his own Glory."—But if God ever acted
wisely in the Permission of Sin, in any one Instance, it
overthrows this Author's Scheme, which supposes such
a thing absolutely inconsistent with the divine Perfections.
(p. 8, 17. &c.) And that it makes God the Author of
Sin. (p. 16.) And gives the greatest Encouragement to
all Wickedness, (p. 28, 29.)

true : and I believe both the Consequences, which equally follow.— You believe the Proposition to be true, when you think it will serve your turn : but at another time say, “ I do doubt whether God in fact does what is most for his own Glory.”

As God intended before the Foundation of the World to permit Sin, for holy and wise Ends, it was of the utmost Importance, that he should do it under such Circumstances, that the whole intellectual System might see and know, that he did not do it, as looking upon Sin, as being Good in it self, or as tending to Good : yea, under such Circumstances, that his Permission of it might not, in the Eyes of finite Intelligences, lessen, but rather infinitely increase the Horrors of it. Therefore he not only created all holy, at first ; but also “ forbid Sin under the severest Penalties ;” yea actually executed the infinitely dreadful Penalty on the sinning Angels, who were the first Transgressors, without any Mercy. And while he exercised Mercy towards fallen Man, he did it in such a Way, as will finally, and on the whole, shew his Hatred of Sin, as much, nay more than if he had treated them as he did the fallen Angels. But while the whole Tenour of his Conduct thus joins to set his Hatred of Sin in a most striking Light ; his actual Permission of it, at the same time, equally proves, that he did not think it best, to prevent it by his own immediate Interposition. Which demonstrates, that he saw a better Way than that, to advance his own Glory and the Good of the System. In what Respects his present Method is better than that, I have endeavour’d to shew in my *Sermons*. (p. 125,—209.) But while you take for granted, that God cou’d not wisely permit Sin, unless he looked upon Sin, as *in it self Good* ; you run your self into the utmost Confusion ; and even necessitate your self to believe, either that God thinks Sin a good Thing, or that God did not

not act wisely, "did not do what was most for his own Glory," in permitting it. (p. 13, 16, 17.)

A. "Best to stand, and best to fall; best to obey, and best to rebel; sound at least like Contradictions." (p. 20.)

B. MANY Propositions may "sound like Contradictions," which are perfectly consistent. For the same thing may be *best*, and *not best*, in different Respects. As to the Crucifixion of Christ, for Instance, it may be said, *it was best to be, & best not to be*. For the Death of Christ, considering the Good to be brought out of it, was a most glorious Event. But the Death of Christ, considered as a Murder committed by the spiteful Jews, was a very horrid Crime.— So it was *best* that *Joseph should be sold*, considered as one Step towards that Advancement, which God designed; but it was *not best*, considered as an effectual Means to prevent his Advancement, as his Brethren intended it.— So, it might be *best* that *Adam should fall*, if in the Eyes of the OMNISCIENT GOD, the only proper Judge, his Fall would give Opportunity for infinite Wisdom to bring more Glory to God and Good to the System, than otherwise could be: but it was *not best*, merely as an Act of open Rebellion against the Maker and Lord of all Things; subjecting all this lower World to Ruin.

A. BUT the holy Scriptures assure us, God is so far from thinking it best that Sin should be, that rather it *grieves him to the Heart*. Gen. vi. 6. *And it repented the Lord that he made Man upon the Earth, and it grieved him at the Heart.* viz. because they had become so exceeding Wicked. Wherefore the Lord destroyed the Earth by a Flood. (p. 19. 25.)

B. THAT Sin, in it self, is infinitely disagreeable to the divine Nature, is granted. That it was nevertheless best, that Sin should be, with a View to the Good to be brought out of it by God; and that therefore

therefore God acted agreeable to all his Perfections in the Permission of it, is still affirmed. Nor do these Words, considered with their Context, militate against, but rather greatly confirm this Truth.

FOR the true Sense of those Words is plainly this, *viz.* that the sinful State of Mankind before the Flood was in it self infinitely disagreeable to God, who is an infinitely holy and benevolent Being; and viewed therefore merely in it self, had the greatest Tendency, in Fact, to *grieve* and distress the HOLY ONE; and make him sincerely *repent* that ever he made the World. And therefore, were Things always to be so, and no Good ever to come of it, he never would have made the World; nor would he have continued it in Being when made, to grieve his Heart, and wear out his Life with continual Sorrow; infinitely vexed and grieved, crossed and disappointed, in a continued Series of Wickedness, from the beginning to the end of the World. Therefore as these Words, in the strongest Manner, express the infinite Holiness and Goodness of the divine Nature; so they are quite favourable to the present Truth.—For,

IF God does really look upon Sin in this Light, why did he ever make the World, as he knew how Things would issue? Or, why did not he destroy all Mankind at the general Deluge, as he knew what they were, and how they would prove afterwards? (*their Imaginations evil from their Youth. Gen. viii. 21.*) and make a new World, and People it with a better Race? Which he might have done with infinite Ease.—The plain and only Answer, which we can possibly give to these Questions, is, that altho' Sin was so infinitely disagreeable to the Divine Nature, considered in it self; yet, on the whole, he chose the present Plan, with a View to the infinitely greater Good, he knew he could, & he knew he would, bring out of all this Evil. And so all this Evil, in the issue, be but like the Drops of Rain,

Rain, in which the Rainbow is formed, when the Sun breaks forth in his Strength, (an Emblem of the *Sun of Righteousness*) and as the Blackness of the Cloud after a Storm, which does but add Beauty and Brightness to the Rain-bow ; which the most High appointed as a *Token of his Covenant*, and which, perhaps as an *Hieroglyphic*, was design'd to suggest the true Reason of God's continuing the World in Being.— Therefore, when *Noah* after the Flood offered Sacrifice, a Type of the great Sacrifice of Christ ; that *Seed of the Woman*, which was by Heaven's high Decree, to *bruise the Serpent's Head*, and by superiour Wisdom turn all his Mischief to greater Good, the only Way to crush the Head and for ever perfectly subdue that old Serpent, which is the Devil : I say, therefore when *Noah*, according to divine Institution, offered Sacrifice, and brought into View the great Messiah, and all his glorious Work, God was well pleased — Good will come out of Evil — *And the LORD smelled a sweet Savour ;* — (in the Hebrew, a *Savour of Rest*. God's Heart was now well pleased) *and the LORD said in his Heart*, (as being perfectly pleased with his perfect Plan, upon the whole,) *I will not again curse the Ground any more for Man's Sake ; altho' the Imagination of Man's Heart is evil from his Youth.* Gen. viii. 21. — As if he had said, “ I know
 “ Mankind will be as bad as ever. However, I
 “ will destroy them no more ; but continue Summer and Winter, Seed-Time and Harvest, for the Benefit of the human Race ; because the *Seed of the Woman* will, in the issue, *bruise the Serpent's Head*,
 “ disappoint his whole Scheme, and bring greater
 “ Good out of all this Evil.”

BUT to return to the Sense you put on the Text. *It repented the Lord that he had made Man on the Earth, and it grieved him at the Heart.*—But, Dear Sir, why repent and be grieved at the Heart, that he made Man ;
 and

and yet after all, continue this Race in Being ! and so, practically prefer the present Plan before any other : when, of all possible Plans, he still had his Choice ; and the very best, by one Word's speaking, you think, might with infinite Ease have been, by him, brought into Existence ; and so, He perfectly pleased for ever !—Or, when all Man kind, but eight, were destroyed by the Flood, it had been an easy thing to have destroyed them ; and so made thorough Work : and to have created another *Adam* and *Eve*, and effectually prevented their Fall ; and so have had all things perfectly to his Mind.—To be *grieved* with, and *repent* of his *old Plan*, considered in the whole ; and yet to go on with it, at the same time ; when of all possible Plans, he still had his Choice, even at the Flood, is perfectly inconsistent.—Your Sense of the Words therefore, Sir, cannot be right : and unless you will make the HOLY ONE of Israel inconsistent with himself, you must come into the Sense which I have given.

BUT we have had enough, quite enough, of this kind of Objections. I wish you would urge something more directly to the Purpose. Pray, prove, if you can, either that God has not in Fact permitted Sin ; or, that he is not an absolutely perfect Being : for if both these are true, a thousand Objections cannot overthrow the Doctrine of the Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin.—Rather, you will be found fighting against God ; which, as you own, is an “extremely dangerous” thing.

A. I do not chuse to say, that in Fact God has not permitted Sin : but this I am bold to say, that there is not “one single Scripture-Text,” which teaches, that God ever permitted Sin, in one single Instance, with a View to the Good, that he intended to bring out of it.—(p. 3.)

B. WELL,

B. WELL, this is to the Purpose indeed, were it true.— But it is strange that a Man, with his Bible in his Hands, and his Eyes in his Head, should ever say so.—*Ye thought Evil against me*, says Joseph to his Brethren. “Your Design, in what was done, was an evil Design. But God’s Design, in what was done, was a good Design. *God meant it unto Good.*” Which, it is plain, refers not to God’s *after-Act*, but to his *original Intention*. — *God meant it*, i. e. God meant I should be sold. He *meant it* as much as you did. Your Scheme was to prevent my Advancement. But *God meant it unto Good*, i. e. “God intended that Event should come to pass, to answer the good Ends he had in view.”—What can be plainer !

BUT if you want another Instance, you may have it in *Pharaoh* : Where the Expressions used are much stronger than such as I have been wont to use, (as indeed Scripture-Expressions relative to this Subject generally are,) and evidently take in some Ideas over and above a mere *Permission*, as I have explained that Word. For God not only left *Pharaoh* to the hardness of his own Heart, but ordered external Circumstances so, as considering *Pharaoh’s* Temper, God knew would infallibly strengthen his Obstinacy. Particularly, in suffering the *Magicians* to imitate several of the Miracles of *Moses*, and from time to time removing the Plagues, and so giving Opportunity for *Pharaoh* to regain his Courage, and renew his Opposition &c. And God plainly intended by all, that Things should be carried to such an Extremity as they were, that he might the better answer his own holy, wise and glorious Ends. Yea, God expressly declares, that this was his Design. *Exod. xiv. 1, 2, 3, 4. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the Children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the Sea, over against Baal-Zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the Sea. For Pharaoh will say of the Children of Israel, They are entangled in the Land, the*

F *Wilderness*

Wilderness hath shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh's Heart, that he shall follow after them, and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his Host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.

WHEN God first sent Moses into Egypt to Pharaoh, he told him before-hand, *I am sure that the King of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty Hand. And I will stretch out my Hand, and smite Egypt with all my Wonders, which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. Exod. iii. 19, 20.* And the whole Scheme is open'd in *Chap. x. 1, 2.* Where nothing can be plainer than that God had holy and wise Ends in view in all he did. *I have, says the HOLY ONE of Israel, hardened his Heart, and the Heart of his Servants: — but for what End? — that I MIGHT shew these my Signs before him: — but to what Purpose? — and that thou MAYEST tell in the Ears of thy Son, and of thy Son's Son, what Things I have wrought in Egypt, and my Signs which I have done amongst them. — And all for what? — THAT YE MAY KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD.* — Compared with *Chap. ix. 16.* And in very Deed, says God himself, *for this Cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my Power; and that my Name may be declared throughout all the Earth.* — But as it is of Importance, to know in what Light the holy Scriptures set this Subject, pray read and compare *Gen. xv. 12—16. and xlv. 5—8. and 1. 20. Exod. iii. 18—20. and iv. 21. and vii. 3, 4, 5, 13. and ix. 12, 16. and x. 1, 2, 20, 27. and xi. 9, 10. and xiv. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 17, 18. Deut. ii. 30. Josh. xi. 20. 2 Sam. xii. 11, 12. and xvi. 10, 11, 21, 22. 1 King. xi. 9, 14, 23, 26—39. and xii. 15. and xxii. 19—23. 2 King. xxiv. 20. 2 Chron. x. 15. and xxv. 20. and xxxii. 31. Job i. 6—12, 21, 22. and ii. 1—6, 10. Psal. cv. 17, 25. Isai. x. 5—15. Jer. 25. 9. and xxvii. 1—7. and li. 20—25. Matth. xxvi. 53, 54. Luk. xxii. 21, 22. and xxiv. 25—27. Job. xix. 24, 33—37. Act. ii. 23. and iii. 18. and iv. 24—28. Rom.*

Rom. ix. 18, 22, 23. and xi. 7 — II. 1 Cor. xi. 19. 2 Thes. ii. 11, 12. Rev. xvii. 17. — Pray, read these "Scripture-Texts," my Friend, and then tell me, whether the Doctrine of *God's permitting Sin for wise and holy and good Ends*, be from Heaven, or of Men.

A. As to the Affair of *Joseph*, which you so much insist upon, I grant, it was by infinite Wisdom overruled for Good. But however, it is not at all "to your Purpose." (p. 6.)

B. BUT, Sir, perhaps others will think it much to the Purpose. For, if God has, in only one Instance, permitted Sin for wise and holy Ends, it is at least possible, that he may have done so in all Instances. And if *he always acts like himself*, no doubt, this is, in fact, the very Case.

BESIDES, if God did permit Sin in the Affair of *Joseph*, for wise and good Ends, all your *ten Objections* in P. 16, 17, 18, 19. are answered all at once; and indeed the Substance of your Book.— Unless you will adopt the very Absurdities you pretend to abhor, and maintain for Truth, "that God was the Author of that Sin, and loved it; and that *Joseph's* Brethren acted like the greatest Saints in that Affair; had no Cause to mourn for their Sin, nor their Father to lament his want of Success in the Education of his Children, or to be at all grieved for their Wickedness. Yea, that their Sin was no Sin, but rather a Virtue. And if *Jacob* or *Joseph* approved and admired the Wisdom of God in that Affair, it must argue, they had very unworthy Conceptions of God, to think he could not bring about his good Designs without suffering so much Evil; and had they been consistent with themselves, they must have turned Infidels; or at least have discarded all those Texts of Scripture, which represent God as *hating Sin*, being grieved with it, and

“and *angry* because of it.”—If in fact God did permit *Joseph* to be sold, *meaning it unto Good* ; if this was *God's Scheme*, in such a Sense as that *Joseph* might justly say, *GOD sent me hither* ; then may you do well to reconsider your own Words, with Application to your self ; “If the present Scheme be *GOD's*, it “would be extremely dangerous opposing it ; and “argue the highest Vanity, Arrogance and Impiety.” It is plain Fact, that *Joseph* viewed and considered that whole Affair as *GOD's Scheme*, as much as I do, and uses as strong Expressions, as I have any where done. Only read *Gen.* xlv. 5--8. and be impartial.

A. BUT, “it is not parallel in one material Circumstance. Nay, the Case is wholly different, and “therefore quite foreign to the Purpose : For all “concerned in the Conduct and Consequences of “that Affair, were in a State of *Sin* ; and therefore “deserved all the Chastisements they received. They “had all Blemishes in their Characters, which may “easily account for their Sufferings.” (p. 6, 7.)

B. TRUE. “They *deserved* their Sufferings.” Nor did God ever inflict Pain, no, nor the least Degree of it, in any one Instance, in the whole intellectual System, but in which it was deserved, as much as they deserved their Sufferings.—To be sure, we in this World “are in a *State of Sin*,” and deserve our Sufferings, and need our Chastisements, as much as they did. Nor did God begin to chastise us, until after we had become Sinners.

If you should say, “that *Joseph's* Brethren deserved to be chastised for their Pride and Envy ; and that therefore God left them to themselves, to fall into that Sin, that he might in the Issue humble them, and bring them to a better Mind :” this would overthrow your whole Scheme. For according to this, God did permit Sin for wise and holy Ends ; the very Point, that I affirm, and the very Point, that you deny. OR,

OR, if you should say, "However, as they were Sinners, God might *justly* leave them to Sin; but God could not, consistent with *Justice*, leave *innocent* Beings to Sin;" this would suppose, that God was *obliged*, in Justice, to keep all innocent Beings from falling. And consequently, that God's permitting Sin was an Act of *Injustice*; and consequently, that God is not a just Being.

OR, if you should only say, that "they had *provoked* God to leave them; but innocent Beings had not;" it is easy to observe, that according to Scripture-account, God permitted *Joseph* to be sold, not so much in anger at *Joseph* or *Jacob's* Family; as out of love to them, for their Good. As it is written, *God meant it unto Good*. God had his own Glory and the general Good in View, in that Affair, just as I suppose he had in suffering our first Parents to fall.

OR, if I should grant, "God suffered *Joseph's* Brethren to fall into that Sin, out of *Anger* at them, as was doubtless the Case with *Pharaoh*, when God suffered him to pursue Israel into the red Sea:" yet it is plain, that in both Cases, he had his own Glory and the general Good in view. And so both Cases are analogous to his Conduct relative to the whole System, for Substance. And only granting, what none deny, that it was no *Injustice* to innocent Beings, for God to permit them to fall; there is no "material Difference," which at all hurts the "parallel," for the "Purpose," for which it is used in my Sermons. For this is my Argument, as I just now stated it: "If in some Instances God permits Sin for wise and holy Ends, it is possible he may in all. And if he *always acts like himself*, then, no doubt, in fact, he *always does*." (See my *Serm.* p. 103, &c.) An Argument you have no way to answer, but by giving

ing up the absolute Perfection of the divine Nature.*

A. BUT *Joseph* needed humbling, and to have his Corruptions mortified : holy Beings did not need to be humbled, and had no Corruptions to mortify. (p. 7, 8, 9.)

B. FINITE Intelligences, holy as they originally were, needed to have their holy Biasses farther confirmed ; as is plain from the Apostacy of some of them. And they were capable of vast, and almost infinite Improvements in Knowledge, Humility, Holiness, and Happiness ; and the greater Advantages for Improvement afforded them, the swifter would be their Progress ; as was observed in the *Sermons* you object against.

A. BUT I affirm, there might have been as great Advantages for all divine Improvements, in the intellectual System, if Sin and Misery had been forever unknown, as on the present Plan. (p. 10, 11.)

B. THIS, Sir, you can never prove. And as the infinitely wise God has chosen the present Plan, we ought

“ Because God educes many happy Consequences from
 “ moral Evil in this State, therefore he thought best
 “ that moral Evil should be, &c.” (p. 6, 7.) is a *false* Principle, this Author says, I had laid down. But let the Principle be true or false, it is all his own. I never laid it down : nor built any Part of my Reasoning upon it. My Argument is stated above, in brief : And at large in my *Sermons* (p. 103, &c.) and is entirely different ; And, for aught appears, is absolutely unanswerable, on this Side down-right *Atheism*, or, which is the same thing, the Denial of the Existence of an absolutely perfect Being. For, if there is such a Being, he cannot but “ always act like himself.” And then the Consequence is plain.

ought in honour to his Wisdom, and as we would not give up the moral Rectitude of his Nature, to believe it to be the best. For, as St. *Augustine* saith, "Unless it were good that there should be Evil, it would by no Means be permitted by the Almighty God, who is able to hinder the Commission of that Evil, if he would." (*Enchirid. Cap. 95.*)

A. BUT it is "to limit the holy One of Israel," to say, that he could not manifest and communicate himself to finite Intelligences on any other Plan, so well as this. (p. 11, 18, 19.)

B. No, Sir; but rather, if infinite Wisdom has chosen the best, it is the highest Arrogance in us, to say, there might have been a better. It is to set up our Wisdom above God's.—And to say, that God did not mean to chuse the best, is gross Blasphemy; as has been fully demonstrated.

A. HOWEVER, for my Part, I cannot see any good End, but what might have been as well, nay infinitely better answered, if Sin and Misery had been for ever unknown. (p. 9—12, 19—25.)

B. THAT is, you have lived in God's World, perhaps, these forty Years, his Works before your Eyes, his Word in your Hands; and while the Inhabitants of Heaven, in the view of the Divine Conduct, are constantly crying, *The whole Earth is full of his Glory*; to you, it is all *as dark as Egypt*. You see no Wisdom in God's present Plan. Yea, it appears infinitely to God's Dishonour, and to the Damage of the System. So that you are even tempted to look upon almost the whole of it, as the "Scheme of the Devil." And when you see how God permits the Devil to practise and prosper, you are ready to doubt, whether the holy ONE of Israel so much as means to do that which he knows is most for his own Glory.

A. But

A. But the Hypothesis you go upon, is entirely false, *viz.* that it was worth while, that all the Misery which is or ever will be in the System, should be, merely to give holy Beings a higher Relish for their own Happiness. Just as if a View of Misery, as such, were the chief Source of the Happiness of Heaven ; and a View of the Vengeance of God and Misery of the Creature, the most ravishing Sight in the Universe.—A shocking Scheme ! (p. 9, 10, 11.)

B. YES, Sir, a shocking Scheme indeed ! but it is one of your own Invention. It is none of mine.

I BELIEVE that “ Love is the Sum of God’s moral Perfections ;” and in one Sense (an *ill* Sense) there is no such thing as *Vengeance* in the Divine Nature. I believe, that *Love* is the very essence of vindictive Justice.—“ *Love* to God, to Virtue, to the best Good “ of the System, bearing down in a wise and righteous “ Manner the Enemies of God, of Virtue, and of “ the System,” is the Definition I gave of it in my *Sermons*, (p. 190.) —“ An amiable Perfection in the Deity !” (p. 191.) — And I believe, that the chief Advantages, which will accrue to holy Beings from a View of the Misery of the Damned, will be, as the Scriptures teach, (*Rom. ix. 22.*) to give them the most lively and affecting Sense of the glorious Perfections of the Divine Nature ; *viz.* boundless Power, Holiness, and Goodness ; or in other Words, God’s infinite Hatred of Sin, and Ability to punish it, and the infinite Riches of his Grace in the Work of Redemption by Jesus Christ. (p. 191.) For it is a View, not of Deformity, but of Beauty ; not of Misery, *as such*, but of the glorious Perfections of the Divine Nature, manifested in the moral Government of the World,—an absolutely perfect Plan, which is the Source of the Happiness of the heavenly State.— And I believe, that it is *Love*, to God, to Virtue, and to the best Good of the System, which is the chief
Source

Source of the exalted Joys of the heavenly Inhabitants ; who, on a View of the just Punishment of God's obstinate Enemies, cry, *Amen ! Hallelujah ! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth ! — Again they said, Hallelujah. And her Smoke rose up for ever and ever. — Let us be glad and rejoyce, and give Honour to him : for the Marriage of the Lamb is come. (Rev. xix. 1—7.)*

—They do not rejoyce in their Misery *as such*, nor in their Misery as giving themselves a higher Relish for their own Happiness ; but they rejoyce to see God exalted, his Authority vindicated, his Law honoured, Sin discountenanced, Satan and his Cause subdued, the Messiah victorious. And this “tremendous Scene,” by Way of Contrast, tends to give the most affecting Sense of all the Divine Perfections, as shining forth in the Work of Redemption, the most glorious of all God's Works. So that, upon the whole, the Saved will be under the best Advantages for ever to have a fresh Remembrance of what they once were, and to see what they deserved, and where they might have been, and what God has done, and to behold all his glorious Perfections as shining through all his Works of Mercy and of Justice, in a Light infinitely bright, and under Circumstances most suited to engage their Attention, and affect their Hearts, and to give them the highest Sense of their Dependence on God, and Obligations to him. So that they will have the best Means to make the swiftest Progress in divine Knowledge, Humility, Holiness and Happiness for ever.—But you must be referred to my *Sermons*, where these Points are more fully discussed, than my intended Brevity will now admit.

A. BUT, “had we a just Sense of the Worth of our Mercies, could we need any thing to raise it higher ?” And was our Gratitude equal to the worth of our Mercies, could we need any thing to make us more thankful ? i. e. if we were perfect, could we be more than perfect ? (p. 9, 10.)

B. THAT

B. THAT perfect Intelligences in Heaven may and will make *Progress* in Holiness and Happiness for ever, you may see proved at large by Dr. WATTS on *the Happiness of separate Spirits*.—It is too plain a Case to admit of Dispute. For the *Favour* granted to the meanest Inhabitant of Heaven, being of eternal Duration, is of infinite Worth. And so he never can have a full Sense of its worth ; or exercise a Degree of Gratitude equal to its worth ; *i. e.* be as thankful to God for it, as it deserves. No, not if his Progress in a grateful Disposition, if I may compare things spiritual to things natural, should be eternally as swift as a Ray of Light from the Sun ; which they say, will fly eighty Millions of Miles in about seven Minutes.—

A. BUT it is a Reflection upon the intellectual System, to suppose they stood in Need of this “ tremendous Scene ” for their Instruction, or Confirmation. † And a Reflection upon “ the Benevolent Father

† If a Consideration of the dreadful Consequences of Sin is of no use to confirm *holy* Beings, as this Author thinks, (*p.* 12.) why was *Death* threatned to deter *Adam* from Sin ? — If a meer threatning tends to deter, much more an actually Execution. — Since Satan and his Hosts were driven out of Heaven, down to an eternal Hell, for Sin ; and *Adam* turned out of Paradise, and all this lower World doomed to Death, for the first Transgression ; there has not been one Instance of the Apostacy of a holy Being in all God’s Dominions.—This Author seems to think, that because holy Beings love God supremely, therefore they love themselves not at all. Which is contrary to Reason, and to Scripture. *Gen.* ii. 17. *Heb.* xii, 2.—However, he attempts to prove the Point, from *1 Joh.* iv. 18. *Perfect Love casteth out Fear*. Altho’ it is plain from the Context, that the *perfect Love* there spoken of, is nothing more than that high Degree

ther of the Universe," to suppose, that he really chose "this awful Expedient", when there was no Need of it; when all good Ends might have been answered as well without it; nay, infinitely better, infinitely more to the Honour of God, and the Good of the System. (p. 11. 12, 19—24.) "The benevolent Father of the Universe wanted neither Power nor Will, in Ways inconceivable to us, to raise his Creatures Happiness to the highest possible Degrees, without this awful Expedient." (p. 11.)

B. IF "the benevolent Father of the Universe wanted neither *Power* nor *Will*" to lay and prosecute the very wisest Plan; then, to a Demonstration, God's present Plan is such; — "a most glorious Expedient!" — And if the all-wise God knew, that of all possible Plans this was the best, most adapted to the finite Capacities of finite Intelligences, and most suitable to answer all the good Ends he had in View; then, without any Reflection upon the intellectual System, or upon himself, he might prefer the present Plan to all others, as in fact he has. — And you say, "that you cannot pretend to prove, to a Demonstration, that the present Scheme is not in fact the best." (p. 5.) — Wherefore, since God has in fact chosen it before all others, and is so "benevolent, that he cannot want a Will" to choose the best; I appeal to you, I appeal to the World, — Which becomes us, as we would be consistent with our selves, or regard the Honour of "the benevolent Father of the Universe;"

gree of Love, which some good Men attain to in this Life. Which altho it delivers them from that *Fear*, which arises from want of Evidence of their good Estate; yet by no Means tends at all to set them above being moved to watch and pray, from a Sense of the infinitely dreadful Consequences of Sin. As is plain from *Luk. xxi. 36. Rom. viii. 13. 1 Cor. ix. 27.*

verse ;" either, to believe it to be best, because it is God's ; or to "doubt whether God has in fact done what is most for his own Glory," in this Affair ! (p. 13.)

A. BUT "would not the least Reflection have assured them, that if God delighted in Truth, Holiness and Justice, he must hate the contrary ? that if "he rewarded the loyal, he must punish the disobedient ?" (p. 11.)

B. DOUBTLESS the Angels that sinned, had, before their fall, Time for some Reflection : but it is not to be supposed, that they sinned in a full and certain Assurance of being driven immediately out of Heaven into an eternal Hell. — 'Tis certain, our first Parents had time for Reflection, and did reflect ; but their "Assurance of God's Holiness, Truth & Justice" was not sufficient, in the Hour of Temptation, to make them believe "he would punish the disobedient." For altho' God had expressly declared, *In the Day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*, yet Satan perswaded them to believe they *should be as Gods* ; and to disobey their Maker, in Expectation thereof.--- These are Facts : and Facts are stubborn Things.--- How know we therefore, but that God saw it really necessary for the best Good of his eternal Kingdom, that he should have Opportunity to exemplify all his Perfections in his Conduct, in the Manner he does on the present Plan ? — After the present "Grand Drama" is finish'd at the Day of Judgment, a Sense of all the Divine Perfections will be impressed almost infinitely deeper, on the Minds of holy Beings, than when they first came into Existence. Then they believed, that God was true ; but now they will see it, and know it. Then they believed, that God hated Sin, and would punish it ; but now, while Satan and all his Adherents are for ever tormented in the
Lake

Lake of Fire and Brimstone, in their Presence, before their Eyes, it will give them quite a new Sense of God's "Holiness, Justice and Truth;" and an inconceivably greater "Assurance that he will punish the disobedient."—And if the Holiness and Happiness of Heaven arise from the Knowledge of God; the better they know him, the more holy and happy will they be.—Besides, God has had Opportunity to exemplify his Faithfulness as to his Promises, as well as his Truth in his Threatnings; and that in a great variety of Instances, since the Beginning of the World. And when at last all holy Beings shall see all God's past Promises fulfilled to a tittle, it will give them the highest Assurance of the Fulfilment of what will then remain; *viz.* of their secure Enjoyment of the Glories and Joys of Heaven to all Eternity. And they will believe it, and as it were see it, and enjoy it all at once.

A. BUT "would not the least Reflection" have given holy Beings all that Knowledge of the Divine Perfections, which was "essential" to their holiness and happiness, without "this tremendous Scene"? (p. 11.)

B. As soon as they began to think, they would begin to know God, and love him, and rejoyce in him. And the more they thought of him, the more their Knowledge, Love and Joy would be increased. But yet there would be an infinite Degree of Perfection, Glory and Beauty in God, still unseen. Their Knowledge, Love and Joy, altho' free from sinful Defects, were capable of an eternal Increase. And the more compleatly and clearly the Divine Nature should be exhibited to their view in the Divine Conduct, the swifter Progress would they make. And if the present Plan gives God Opportunity to make the brightest and fullest Manifestations of himself, then it is, in this Respect, of all possible Plans the best.

best. And holy Beings will know more of God, and so love him more, and rejoyce more in him. But these Thoughts are largely dwelt upon in my *Sermons*; to which you may be referred. (See Pag. 155,---164.)

A. BUT could not these and all other Ends have been answered as well, "in ways inconceivable to us, without this awful Expedient"? (p. 11.)

B. CAN you conceive (pray, think a little and try!) of any possible Way, wherein the Divine Perfections might have been set in so full, clear, and affecting a Light, and so well adapted to engross the whole Attention of all holy Beings, and fill them with the most exalted Thoughts of the Divine Majesty, as that which God has taken in the Work of Redemption by the Death of his own Son?—But you say, there may be "Ways inconceivable to us."—True—But not inconceivable to God. For all possible Ways lay open to his View; and he had his Choice: and in fact he has chosen the present Plan: but if this had not been the *best Expedient*, God would not have preferred it to all others; because, on your own Concession, he is "the benevolent Father of the Universe, who wants neither Power nor Will" to choose and accomplish, of all possible Plans, the best.--- And to call this "an awful Expedient," as tho' it were the very worst in Nature, which "the benevolent Father of the Universe" esteems the best, casts no small Reproach on the infinite Wisdom and perfect Rectitude of the holy One of Israel.--- But, dear Sir, is it not true, that however we feel, and whatever we say, yet God will in fact abide by his original Choice, and prosecute and accomplish his original Scheme? And no other Plan, *conceivable or inconceivable*, will ever be come into. Nor will God ever own, however boldly we may push the Charge, that he does not do "what is most
for

for his own Glory."--- But rather, having endured with all Long-suffering the ill Treatment of an apostate World, his own Son will at last come, with ten Thousands of his Saints, to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly --- of all their hard Speeches, which they have spoken against him, (Jude 15.) and all the Inhabitants of Heaven will cry, Amen, HALLELUJAH ! (Rev. xix. 1---6.)

A. ALL this I had for Substance heard before, and I looked upon it "infinitely worse than nothing." Yea, I durst boldly tell the World, that I was "ready to embrace the *Manichean Principles*," rather than to come into your Opinion. (p. 8.)

B. THE *Manicheans* maintained, that there was an *Evil Principle* or *Being*, independent on God, and superior to his Controul, which loved and promoted Evil for its own Sake. And consequently, that a great Part of the present System is and eternally will be *Evil* ; answer no good End ; but be *absolutely Evil*. On the contrary, I maintain, that the whole Universe is entirely under the Government of a Being *infinitely Good*. And that, consequently, there is not, nor ever will be, any Evil in the Universe, but what shall answer good Ends, in the whole. That is to say, *There is no absolute Evil in the Universe*.---- Now, which of these two Schemes is the best, most agreeable to a holy and truly benevolent Mind ?

THAT there is much Evil, much Sin and Misery in the Universe, now, and for ever will be, we are both agreed. The grand Question is, Whether, in the whole, all will be over-ruled to Good, or not ? For if it will, no doubt God originally intended it should be ; and conducted as he did, with that in View.

Now since it is plain Fact, that Sin and Misery do take Place in the System ; methinks every one, who is a Friend to God and to the System, should re-

joyce with all his Heart to hear, that *the Seed of the Woman will bruise the Serpent's Head*, bring Glory to God, and Good to the System, out of all the Evil, that ever has or ever will happen ; (and the more Good the better.) And so compleatly disappoint the Devil.*

PRAY,

* What can there be in human Nature, to incline one to feel easier in the Belief, that God had no good End in View in the Permission of Sin, and that no Good will ever come of it ? — I will put it to my own Case. — I am a Sinner : — I have acted freely in sinning : — God's Decrees never influenced me to Sin : — God's permitting, or not hindering, did not influence me : — I acted as I chose : — no Fault on God's Part : — all the Blame lies on me : if I go on impenitent and die in my Sins, I only am to blame : if I am an Enemy to God, and to the System, and to all Good, I deserve to be cast off by God ; and the whole System may, on good Grounds, say, *Amen, Hallelujah !* — and if my eternal Destruction is perfectly right and just, I have in Fact no Reason to complain : — And now, if I do perish, and perish justly, why should I be loth, that God should bring Glory to himself and Good to the System out of my Sin and Ruin ? He did so, in the Instance of Pharaoh ; and to Moses the divine Conduct appeared exceeding glorious. (*Exod xv.*) And if I deserve eternal Destruction, as much as Pharaoh did to be drowned, why should I be loth it should be over-ruled to as much Good ? — Because I am no Friend to God or to the System, but the contrary. There can be no other Reason. For, if I loved God and the System, I should be glad to have God glorified, and the System instructed by my Example ; if I must be punished for my Crimes. As sometimes a penitent Malefactor on the Gallows, from Benevolence to his fellow-Creatures, may sincerely wish the Spectators might take Warning by him. — But to the impenitent Sinner, who is an Enemy to God, and to the System, and to all Good ; and who sees not the great Evil of Sin, nor his Desert of Damnation ; and cares only for himself ; Things must appear in a very different Light. —

PRAY, my Friend, what think you? When Joseph was in Fact sold, — that wicked Deed actually committed; which of the two, would good Jacob have

Light. — Had Pharaoh, for Instance, (whom St. Paul views as a Specimen of obstinate Sinners in general, Rom. ix.) at the Bottom of the Red Sea, heard the Hebrews sing, "The Lord hath Triumphed gloriously;" and upon it remembered the Word once sent to him, "For this Cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my Power, and that my Name may be declared throughout all the Earth:" it would have been a Comfort to him "infinitely worse than nothing." — If he must be drowned, he had infinitely rather it should answer no such End. Yea, nothing could be more cross to the temper of his Heart, or put him to greater Pain. — To think, that, in the midst of all his Haughtiness, he had been in God's Hand, as *Clay in the Hand of the Potter* (Rom. ix. 21.) — to see, that all his proud Opposition to the Almighty had but exactly accomplished the Plan which was in God's Mind, in the Days of Abraham, three or four hundred Years before he was born (*Gen. xv. 12 — 16.*) or had *done Good or Evil* (Rom. ix. 11 — 23.) — to consider, that God's last End was "to shew his Power, and that his Name might be declared throughout all the Earth" (*Exod. ix. 16.*) and that his elected, his chosen People, the Hebrews, whom he hated, "might tell it to their Sons, and to their Sons Sons, what God had done, THAT THEY MIGHT KNOW, THAT HE WAS THE LORD." (*Exod. x. 1, 2.*) — "This, O Pharaoh, was the wise and glorious End, God had in View, in permitting thee to harden thy Heart, and run such a great Length in Wickedness! And in this View the Conduct of the God of Israel towards thee will be approved of and adored by all holy Beings in the intellectual System for ever." — "O horrible!" cries Pharaoh. "This way of accounting for it, appears to me, infinitely worse than nothing."

N. B. If I can heartily approve of the Divine Conduct towards Pharaoh, I can just as well, towards all obstinate Sinners. — If I cannot approve of the Divine Conduct towards Pharaoh, my Quarrel is not with this or that Calvi-

have chosen ? either that no Good should ever be brought out of that Evil ; or that it should be made the Occasion of an hundred, or a thousand, or ten thousand times more Good, in the whole, than to counter-balance the Damage done to his Family ? ||---

Joseph's

nistic Divine ; but with the God of Israel. — And whether the Fault is in God, or in me, will be known by all the World at the Day of Judgment ; when the Righteousness of all God's Ways will be laid open before the whole intellectual System. (Rom. ii. 5) — And if such Doctrines tend to make me turn Infidel ; I am, at Heart, an Infidel already : Yea, an Enemy to the God that made and governs the World. But to use the Words of our Author, “ We ought to be disposed to acquiesce in the Account of this Matter which we have from him who cannot err, in the Oracles of Inspiration.” (p. 15.)

— A Way of accounting for the Divine Conduct, that will afford “ Libertines” and all obdurate Sinners, an “ Encouragement” to continue in Sin, which is “ infinitely worse than nothing,” as this Author himself must be sensible.

¶ If so much Good was brought out of Evil, in the Affair of Joseph ; why may it not be so, as to the System in general ? or why should it be thought *unlikely*, when it would be just *like* God to do it ? The very unlikely Thing that could happen, has already happened. *The SON of GOD has DIED.* And how *gloriously* that Affair will issue, in which the *Creator of the Universe* was so infinitely engaged, as to become *incarnate*, and *die*, I am of the Opinion, never yet entered into the Heart of the most exalted Angel in Heaven fully to conceive. And however the *Author of the Attempt*, like the *unbelieving Lord* in Samaria, (2 Kin. vii. 2.) is ready now to ridicule the Thought of such great Good ; (p. 23.) yet if he may be so happy, and God grant that he may, as to be an everlasting Partaker of it himself, and join in the *new Song* which none can learn but the *Redeemed*, (Rev. xiv. 3.) I doubt not, he will *then* be of a very different Mind.

Joseph's wicked Brethren wished, no Good might come of it.---But, I dare say, that neither the God that made them, nor the Father who begat them, were of that Spirit.---No. God *meant it unto Good*: and Jacob was even ravished with Joy, when God's glorious Designs began to open to his View.

INDEED, Sir, perhaps it may be the Opinion of all judicious Men, that the *Manichean* Scheme, bad as it is, is still preferable to your's. For they supposed, that God *would* have ordered the Affairs of the whole Universe in the wisest, best and most perfect Manner, if he *could*; but he was so counteracted by the *Evil Principle*, that he *could not*. So that even *they* believed, that God's *Intention* was Good: But *you* think God never *designed* to do what he knew was most for his Glory; altho' he could have done it with infinite Ease, and had not one Motive against it, but all possible Motives, of infinite Weight, for it. But Want of *natural Power* is not a Defect so ill, by infinite odds, as Want of *moral Rectitude*.

YEA, my Friend, what if it should be thought, that your Scheme is little, if any, better than down-right Atheism? To be sure, if your Scheme is true, all Religion is overthrown. For if God has suffered infinite Evil and Mischief to come into his own World, a World absolutely under his Government, in which *he doth according to his Pleasure*, absolutely without any good End; yea, contrary to his better Judgment; and when he could easily have hindered it; he is infinitely far from being an absolutely perfect Being, as has been proved. Nor can any holy, truly benevolent Being in the Universe heartily love him, or cordially acquiesce in his Government: For it is strictly impossible, that *absolute Evil* should be acquiesced in by a good Being. For it implies a Contradiction. And if all holy Beings cease to love God and acquiesce in his Government, there is an End to all Religion.

A. BUT,

A. BUT, Sir, I pray you carefully to mind, that I say it, and insist upon it, that "Sin is not God's Scheme, but a Device of the Devil." --- It is "no Part of God's original Scheme." (p. 13, 14, 15, 16.)

B. AND I pray, Sir, what do you mean by this Manner of speaking? --- Do you mean only, "that it was the Devil that sinned, and not God? that other wicked Beings sin, and not God? and that sinning Creatures act freely, and are solely and wholly to blame?" --- All this is exactly true; but not at all to your Purpose. For the Question is not, Who is it that has sinned? God, or the Creature? About this there is no Dispute: The Creature, and none but the Creature, has sinned. But the Question is, Why did the infinitely wise and holy Creator and Governor of the World permit the Creature to Sin, when he could easily have hindered it? --- To this Question, you say nothing; only "that you do not believe that God is obliged to do, or that in Fact he actually does, what is most for his own Glory." (p. 13.) Which is really to give up the absolute Perfection of the Divine Nature.

OR do you mean, "that it was God's original Intention and Design, that Sin should never happen? and that God did all he could to prevent it? but unawares the Devil laid a Scheme, and over-matched the Almighty; and by Craft or Power brought it in, notwithstanding all God could do? And so God's Scheme was disconcerted, and he disappointed, and his World in a great Measure ruined, in Spite of the utmost Exertion of his infinite Wisdom and almighty Power!" --- Some of your Readers, perhaps, may think this your Meaning. But it cannot be; if you mean to be consistent with your self. For according to this, God did *all he could* to secure his own Glory. Which is a Point you do not believe. (p. 13.)

AND

AND yet this must be your meaning : or what you say, is not at all to the Purpose. For if God knew, Sin was likely to happen, and *could* have hindred it, and yet in Fact did not ; the whole Question remains entirely unanswered ; viz. *Why did God permit Sin ?*

THE Truth, perhaps, was, you had no distinct Meaning at all, in saying, that " Sin is not God's Scheme, but a Device of the Devil."

A. INDEED, Sir, I was greatly " embarrassed." (p. 31.) Expressly to deny, that God permits Sin ; I durst not do. To justify his Conduct, I could not. Yea, I esteemed you guilty of great Vanity and Presumption in pretending to do it.--- It was my Opinion, " that no satisfactory Account could be given " of the Divine Conduct in this Affair. (p. 15) For I imagined, that in very deed God had not in this Affair done that which would have been " most for his Glory" to have done. (p. 13.) *

B. How-

* This Author speaks of " resting in the natural and easy Account we have of this Affair in the sacred Scriptures. (p. 15.) and of finding Satisfaction and Repose therein." Which he supposes " the Heart of every good Man does." (p. 25.) — But, pray, what Rest ! what Repose ! what Satisfaction ! can he, or any Man of common Sense, " Good " or " not Good," find in believing, that in this Affair God has done " what was in Fact not most for his own Glory ?" Which he thinks is the true State of the Case.—And when he was so " embarrassed" himself, why should he desire to embarrass others likewise ? — And after so serious and repeated Professions, that he meant to propose his Thoughts with the greatest Modesty and Humility (p. 5. 13, &c.) why did he, instead of a serious Answer to the late President *Edwards* his Reasonings on this Subject, to which I had referred ; rather cry out, " boasted Metaphysics" ? (p. 25.)—" Several Professors in the Dutch Universities have sent him their Thanks" for that Book. And how could the " modest humble Temper" of this Gentleman prompt him to ridicule,

B. HOWEVER, I hope, by this time, you are thoroughly convinced, that whether we can find out the Reasons of the Divine Conduct in this Affair, or no; yet it is of the utmost Importance, that we firmly believe, that God has acted wisely, and in a Manner agreeable to all his glorious Perfections. For it is an Affair of so great Moment, and so infinitely interesting; that if we habitually believe, that God acted contrary to his better Judgment in it, we must entirely give up the absolute Perfection of his Nature. And if God is not an absolutely perfect Being, he is not God. We may compliment him with the *Name*; but we take away the *Thing*.---“We Christians” (saith *Origen*) “say, that God can do nothing which is in it self evil, no more than he is able not to be God. “For if God do any evil, he is not God. God willeth “nothing unbecoming himself---This is inconsistent “with his Godship.” (See Dr. *Cudworth’s intel. Syst.* p. 874:) ---Agreeable to holy Scripture, 2 Tim. ii. 13. *He cannot deny himself.* Heb. vi. 18. *It is impossible for God to lie.*---And if we give up the absolute Perfection of the Divine Nature; and so ungod the Deity; it will become impossible, were our Hearts ever so holy, to love, worship, and trust in him as God, as an absolutely perfect Being; or rejoyce in his universal Government, and be sincerely glad that he is at the Head of the Creation, and can and will do according to his Pleasure in the Armies of Heaven, and amongst the Inhabitants of the Earth.---Yea, it would be a thing infinitely

cule, what the learned World so much admire? He had a Right to answer it, if he could: But if he could not; to ridicule it, will but render himself ridiculous.---And ’tis a Pity he should not know it.---The candid Reader is desired carefully to peruse what Mr. *Edwards* has said on this Subject, in his Book on *Freedom &c.* p. 252—267;

infinitely desirable, that some better Being, some absolutely perfect Being, might be in his Place and take his Throne.--- And so your Scheme really justifies a Spirit of Discontent and Rebellion throughout all God's Dominions.---But this ill Idea of the Divine Majesty, which is harboured in many a Heart in this apostate World, is of the Nature of Blasphemy, *the abominable Thing which God's Soul hates*, and ought to be entirely rooted out of our Minds.

A. "I think it of much greater Importance for us to endeavour to get Sin out of the World ; than fruitlessly to enquire how it came in." (p. 15.)

B. A great Part of the Wickedness of this God-hating World consists in *hard Thoughts and hard Speeches against God.* (*Jude 15.*) Therefore "Sin cannot be got out of the World," till Men are brought to think well of God, and of all his Ways. At least, so far as to put an implicit Trust and Confidence in him, as an absolutely perfect Being, fit to be at the Head of the Universe, and to have the Management and Ordering of all the Affairs of the whole System in his Hands.

It is in vain, to pretend to make Men holy, without Love to God. For it is the first and greatest Part of Holiness, to love God ; and the chief Foundation of all Religion. (*Mat. xxii. 37.*) And it is impossible Men should love God, while they believe, habitually believe, that there is *no God* : i. e. no Being of absolute Perfection at the Head of the Universe, ordering all Things in the wisest and best Manner. (*Psal. xiv. 1, 2.*)

A. SIR, I did think my *Attempt* an unanswerable Piece : And that I had a good Right in the most public Manner to call upon you to "retract." (.p. 30.) --- But, "upon the whole, I think my self under the strongest Engagements to make the most grateful
" Acknow-

“ Acknowledgements for so distinguishing a Favour as
 “ your Reply to my Remarks.” (p. 30.) --- Indeed, the
 Permission of Sin has always appeared to me as an un-
 accountable Affair. (p. 15.) I could never see how
 God could do it, consistent with his own Glory or the
 Good of the System (p. 12, 13. 19---24.) or consist-
 ent even with his own perfect Happiness : as a Being
 of infinite Benevolence, I thought, must have had
 “ greater Pleasure,” if Sin and Misery had been for
 ever unknown in his World. (p. 22.) Therefore, I
 thought, that “ Sin was not God’s Scheme, but a
 Device of the Devil.” (p. 13, 14, 15, 16.) And be-
 cause it is plain Fact, that God has not hindered the
 Devil from doing all this Mischief, as he might easily
 have done, I have been led “ to doubt whether God
 does in Fact, and so whether he is obliged,” from the
 absolute Perfection of his Nature, “ to do, what is
 most for his Glory.” (p. 13.) --- You see my whole
 Scheme, and you have replied to the whole and every
 Part of it ; but if after all, I should feel not satisfied,
 what shall I do ?

B. I WILL tell you, Sir, what to do. And may
 the Lord give you an *hearing Ear*, and an *under-
 standing Heart*.

1. BE firmly perswaded, that not the Devil, but
 God, and God alone, is the absolute Governour of
 the World.

REASON teaches, that God never will, and never
 can, voluntarily give up the Government of his own
 World, into the Hands of his greatest and most a-
 vowed Enemy, the Devil. And, if the Devil is one
 of God’s Creatures, as God himself has taught us in
 his Word, he is so inferiour to the God that made
 him, as to be in his Hands as the Clay is in the
 Hands of the Potter, absolutely at his Controul ; un-
 able by Power or Policy to bring any thing to pass,
 but by the Permission of the great God ; who from
 Heaven

Heaven hath declared, saying, *My Counsel shall stand, and I will do all my Pleasure*, (Isai. xlv. 10.) And whose Schemes cannot possibly be disconcerted, by the united Powers of Earth and Hell. --- Nay, the Powers of Darkneſs are ſo entirely at the Controul of the Almighty, that Satan could not touch holy *Job*, or any Part of his Subſtance, nor ſo much as put a Lie in the Mouth of *Ahab's* lying Prophets, without the Divine Permiſſion. Nor could the affrighted Devils ſo much as enter into the Herd of Swine, till our Saviour ſaid, *Go*. (1 Kin. xxii. 22. Job i. 12. & xi. 6. Mat. viii. 31, 32.) How then could the Devil ſeduce our firſt Parents, and break up God's original Plan, and ruin his new-made World; in ſpite of the utmoſt Exertion of infinite Wiſdom and almighty Power!

THE whole Tenour of Divine Revelation leads us to believe, that the Providence of God extends to all Things which come to paſs. If the Devil or wicked Men were not under the Divine Controul, we ſhould have Reaſon to fear them: but our Saviour aſſures us, they cannot hurt an Hair of our Heads, without God's Permiſſion; whoſe Providence extends even to the very Sparrows, a Bird ſo inſignificant, that *two of them were ſold for a Farthing*: and much more to the Concerns of Men, who are of *more Value than many Sparrows*: and he enjoins his Diſciples, in the belief of this, not to fear the moſt cruel Perſecutors; but to fear God only: for, ſays he, *The very Hairs of your Heads are all numbered*. Mat. x. 16---31. --- And indeed wicked Men (ſo abſolute and univerſal is the Divine Government) are, according to the Language of Scripture, which is the Language of God's Heart, in God's Hand, as a *Rod*, an *Ax*, or a *Saw*, and as much at his Controul. *Isai. x. 5---15*. And therefore St. Paul, viewing Things in this Light, taught Chriſtians in his Day, to conſider all their Perſecutions, as coming from the Hand of their heavenly

H Father,

Father, and designed by him as kind loving Chastisements, for their Benefit : and on this Hypothesis, encourages them not to faint, nor be discouraged : but rather to take all well, and improve all to their spiritual Good. (*Heb. x. xi. xii.*) And in this Light all the People of God, from the very earliest Ages, have been wont to view the Injuries they received from wicked Men, as coming from the Hand of God. So *Job*, when the *Sabeans* and *Chaldeans* had robbed him, views them only as Instruments used by God to answer holy and wise Ends. *The Lord hath given ; and the Lord hath taken away : blessed be the Name of the Lord.* (*Job i. 21.*) So when *Eglon* King of *Moab* came against *Israel* in the time of the Judges, it was looked upon that *God had strengthened him* to do it, thereby to chastise them for their Crimes. (*Judg. iii. 10.*) So when *Shimei* in a most malicious manner cursed *David*, he saw the Hand of God in it, and said, *The Lord hath bidden him.* (*2 Sam. xvi. 11.*) So when *Hadad the Edomite*, and *Rezon the Son of Eliadab*, endeavoured to disturb *Solomon's* peaceful Reign, it was believed by good People, that *God stirred them up* to do it, to chastise *Solomon* for his Sins. As was also the Case with *Jeroboam the Son of Nebat*, that wicked "Pretender," who afterwards made *Israel* to sin. (*1 King. xi.*) And when *Rehoboam* the Son of *Solomon*, thro' the Pride of his Heart, and the ill Advice of his young Men, returned a rough Answer to his Subjects, which issued in the loss of ten Tribes, and was followed with a long Series of Calamities for many Generations, it was said, that *the Cause was of God, that he might perform his Word, &c.* (*2 Chron. x. 15.*) And when *Amaziah* King of *Judah*, through the Vanity of his Mind, challenged *Joash* the King of *Israel* to Battle, which issued in his own Overthrow, it was viewed as coming from God. *For it came of God, that he might deliver them into the Hands of their Enemies, because they fought after the Gods of Edom.* (*2 Chron. xxv. 20.*) And when

when *Ahab* was seduced by his false Prophets to go up to *Ramoth-Gilead* to Battle, to the loss of his Life, the whole Plan is represented as being laid in Heaven. (1 King. xxii.) And when that proud Tyrant, the King of *Babylon*, the *Hammer of the whole Earth*, had destroyed Jerusalem, burnt down the holy Temple, and laid all their Country in Ruins, pious People all saw the Hand of God in it, and believed, that *at the Commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah*, 2 King. xxiv. 3.---But time would fail, to mention all the Instances of this Nature recorded in God's holy Word. And surely it must be needless, when, as in our present War, we, thro' all *New-England*, have in so publick a Manner joined universally to profess and act upon this very Principle; that wicked Men are in the Hands of God, and can do nothing but by his Permission, and are absolutely at his Controul. For which Reason we have had public Fasts, and public Thanksgivings, relative to the War, as tho' we firmly believed the universal Extent of Divine Providence.

BUT if the Providence of God extends to the *lesser*, it much more does to the *greater* Concerns of the intellectual System, as our Saviour reasons, *Mat. x. 29, 30, 31*. If it extends to the sinful Actions of Men in this fallen World, which are comparatively but of little Consequence; much more to the original Introduction of Sin into the moral System; which was an Affair, strictly speaking, of infinite Consequence. --- If it extends to the Sparrows (one of which was valued at but half a Farthing) so that they could not any of them *fall on the Ground* without God's all-seeing Eye and all-ordering Hand; much more to the *fall of Angels*, and to the *fall of Man*, Beings of more Value than many Sparrows.---If the *very Hairs of our Heads are all numbered*; much more is God concerned about the spiritual and eternal Welfare of the whole intellectual System.-- So that we may have the

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greatest Assurance, that ever since the Creation, not one evil Thing has come to pass, but under the Eye of the OMNISCIENT ; determined, permitted, and over-ruled by infinite Wisdom and perfect Rectitude.-- Do you believe this, my Friend ? Indeed you must believe it with all your Heart,—for this is “the Scripture-Account of the Matter.” Besides,

2. GOD is a Being of absolute Perfection ; infinite in Wisdom, perfect in Rectitude, boundless in Goodness ; who has an infinite Regard to his own Honour and to the Good of the System ; as Reason and Revelation join to teach. And as, from the absolute Perfection of the Divine Nature, it is *impossible for God to Lie* ; so, for the same Reason, it is impossible he should counteract any of his Perfections. Therefore the whole of his Conduct towards the intellectual System is absolutely perfect. And is no more capable of Emendation, than God is of becoming holier and wiser than he is. For he must necessarily chuse the best Plan from Eternity, and necessarily abide by it to Eternity.—For,

3. The holy Scriptures give us the fullest Assurance, that God *is the same Yesterday, to Day, and for ever*, (*Heb. xiii. 8.*) *of one Mind*, (*Job xxiii. 13.*) *With whom there is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Change*, (*Jam. i. 17.*) and that his *Counsel shall stand, and he will do all his Pleasure*. (*Isai. xlv. 10.*) So that he never did, and never can, alter his original Plan ; or suffer himself to be disappointed. (*Psal. xxxiii. 10, 11.*)

HE laid a Scheme to bring the Israelites to the Land of Canaan, and promised to do the thing : nor could all their Wickedness in the Wilderness provoke him to give up the Design. Yea, he was disposed to prosecute it, just as much as if they had not sinned : as he informed *Balaam*, to the terror of *Balak*. *God is not a Man, that he should Lie, neither the Son of Man that he should Repent : --- he hath not beheld Iniquity in Jacob, neither*

neither hath he seen Perverseness in Israel. (Num. xxiii. 16—21.)—He had laid a Scheme to continue the Jews his visible People, until the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of the Christian Church: nor could all their Sins before the Babylonish Captivity, nor all their Perverseness afterwards, induce him to cast them off, and give up his Design. No. *I am the Lord*, says he; *I change not*, I abide by my original Plan: therefore ye Sons of Jacob, infinitely provoking as your Conduct is, are not consumed. (Mal. iii. 6.)—He wrought for his great Name's Sake, thro' the whole Affair. (Ezek. xx.) And his infinite Resolution to accomplish his glorious Plan, kept him immoveable, and finally carried him through, in Spite of all possible Provocations from a most ungrateful perverse People; even as he himself had declared, in *Isai. ix. 7.* when speaking of this very thing, he says, *The ZEAL of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.*

AND, as nothing could ever induce the unchangeable God to alter any of his Plans himself; * so none of his Creatures were ever able to disconcert his Schemes. Joseph's Brethren attempted to do it in one Instance, and Pharaoh struggled still much more to do it in another; but in both Cases all they did was over-ruled to accomplish the Divine Designs, to the best Advantage.—God had laid a Scheme to bring the Jews out of the Babylonish Captivity back again

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* God laid a Scheme to bring the *Ninevites* to Repentance. He sent *Jonah* to preach, and threaten Destruction. The *Ninevites* are brought to Repentance, exactly according to his Design. So that he did not alter, but exactly accomplish his Plan in that Case. The same may be said of all other Instances of the like Kind, recorded in Scripture. Which however, are sometimes, contrary to all Reason, used to prove, that the omniscient God may, on new Views, alter his Purposes; when, in Fact, he would not be omniscient, were he capable of so much as one new Idea.

to their own Land. The Thing looked, to them, almost impossible ever to be accomplished. They walked in Darkness, and saw no Light: *Trust in the Lord, and stay your selves on your God*, said the Almighty, speaking of this very Thing. *For my Counsel shall stand, and I will do all my Pleasure.* (Isai. xlv. 10. & l. 10.)— And if the Almighty would not suffer himself to be disappointed in his *lesser Schemes*, which were of *smaller Importance*; much less will he suffer himself to be frustrated in his *Grand universal Plan*, which is of infinitely greater Concern, and in which his own Honour and the eternal Welfare of the whole System are infinitely interested.

BESIDES, if we do but really and firmly believe the absolute Omniscience and All-sufficiency of Him, who is *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, we cannot but see the Reason of the Thing; and be still farther assured, that he can neither alter any of his Plans himself, nor possibly be disappointed by any of his Creatures. For, from Eternity, all possible Plans lay open to his View, he had his Choice, he chose the best; and what in all Nature can induce him to alter his Choice, and prefer one not so good? Upon after-Consideration we often have new Thoughts, or view Things in a different Light, and so alter our Schemes for the better. But God has not had one new Idea since he has been in Existence. From Eternity he existed, and from Eternity all Things were perfectly in his View. It is therefore absolutely impossible, he should ever see any Reason to change his Purposes; and equally impossible, he should change them absolutely without any Reason at all. — And his infinite Wisdom and almighty Power, whereby he is absolutely All-sufficient, and able, with the greatest Ease, to do according to his Pleasure, in the *Armies of Heaven, and amongst the Inhabitants of the Earth*, renders it simply impossible that any of his Creatures, by Power or Policy,

Policy, should be able to disconcert any of his Schemes. And *this* he knows ; — and this lays a solid Foundation for his perfect Tranquillity, and compleat Self-Enjoyment. And in the view of *this* he can be perfectly happy, and even without one uneasy Thought, at the Head of the Universe, let the Storms here below rise ever so high. *The Lord on high is mightier than the Noise of many Waters, yea, than the mighty Waves of the Sea.* (Psal. xciii. 4.) And *this* renders him a fit Object of Trust, a secure Refuge to his People, *tho' the Earth be removed, and the Mountains cast into the midst of the Sea.* (Psal. xlv. 1—7.) — But this leads me to add,

4. BE firmly perswaded of the perfect and unchangeable Happiness of the holy One of Israel. Or in other Words, Believe with all your Heart, that he is, not only in *Name*, but in *deed* and in *truth*, *over all*, **GOD BLESSED FOR EVER.** (Rom. ix. 5.)

I GRANT, he is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity ; an infinitely holy and good Being ; infinitely engaged to advance his own Honour and the Good of his own World. I grant, that Sin in its own Nature is infinitely to his Dishonour, and tends to the utter Ruin of the whole Universe. I grant also, that to set forth God's infinite Abhorrence of Sin, and its Contrariety to his perfect Felicity, & natural Tendency really to put him to Pain and distress his Heart, God is often said, in the Language of Scripture, to be *grieved*, to be *vexed*, to be *wearied*, to be *tried*, to be *pressed as a Cart full of Sheaves* ; and could Sin finally disappoint God's glorious Designs, and frustrate the original Scheme he had in View in the Creation of the Universe, break up the Plan on which his Heart was so infinitely set ; could this be, I grant, that he would be not only *less happy* (as you inadvertently have intimated that in Fact he now is, in saying, that he would have had "greater Pleasure," if Things had been

been otherwise, p. 22.) I say, not only *less happy*, but *really miserable*; and that to an *infinite Degree*: even equal to his infinite Regard to his own Honour, and to the Good of the Universe. — To see himself disappointed finally and for ever, in what was infinitely dear to him; and that in Spite of the utmost Exertion of his infinite Wisdom & almighty Power; and disappointed by his own Creatures, the Clay in his own Hands; headed by the Devil, his avowed Enemy (were such an Event possible) would make him *feel* himself not to be Almighty and All-sufficient; --- not to be God; — not to be King, Supreme and Independent; but to lie at the Mercy of his Creatures; yea, (horrible as the Expression is) to lie at the Mercy of the Devil, the grand Enemy to God and to all Good. Which *Feeling* must render the Misery of such a Being as God is, absolutely compleat. For if the Devil can break up God's Schemes, just when he pleases; God is absolutely at his Mercy, as to the Accomplishment of any of them.

So certain, therefore, as we are, that he is, in Fact, *over all God BLESSED FOR EVER*; just so certain may we be, that *his Counsel shall stand, and he will do all his Pleasure*. And the whole Universe shall *know that he is the LORD*, and the whole System be *filled with his Glory*.

AND the Omniscient Almighty God, perfectly conscious to all this, perfectly enjoys himself, absolutely superior to so much as one uncomfortable Idea; and without the least Uneasiness, in perfect Tranquillity, is possessed of an infinite Degree of Happiness. Or to express all in one Word, He is *over all God blessed for ever*. — *Of whom, and by whom, and to whom are all things; to whom be Glory for ever. Amen.*

AND what if we cannot see fully into the Reasons of the Divine Conduct in the Permission of Sin, shall we think he has acted unwisely? Shall we think he
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does not mean to do what is best? Shall we give up the absolute Perfection of the Divine Nature? Shall we ungod our Maker? rather than suspect our own Judgment! — Or shall we give up our belief of the perfect Happiness of the infinitely glorious and blessed God, and believe him to be a very miserable Being, rather than to think, that he can be pleased with that very Plan, which he has in Fact chosen, before all possible Plans? — Or if he is perfectly pleased with his own Plan, shall we fly in his Face? Charge him with being the Author of Sin? and represent the Devil, as the greatest Saint; and God, as the greatest Sinner? as you seem to have, dear Sir, with dreadful boldness, ventured to do. (p.16,17.) * Wherefore,

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* Were it natural to all Mankind, heartily to acquiesce in all the Dispensations of Divine Providence, as being perfectly wise, holy, just and good, excepting only the Permission of Sin, it would not seem so likely, at first Glance, that the Fault was wholly in us in this Case. It would be an exempt, strange Case. And we might be more at a loss to account for it. But it is not at all uncommon or strange for Mankind to dislike the Divine Conduct in other Instances, as well as this. — Thus, it is a common Thing for the Crosses and Troubles of Life to sit heavy on the Spirits of Mankind. And a general Murmuring goes round the World. And Thousands think that none meet with so much Trouble as themselves: and that they have good Reason to be discontented. Yet if they have good Reason to be discontented, they are not to blame: but the Fault is in God, in whose Hand the Rod is, and from whom all our Afflictions come — O how hard is it for many a one under great Afflictions to bring their Hearts sweetly to approve of the Divine Conduct, and love and bless the God that chastises them! O how difficult to get and maintain that Frame of Spirit, which holy Job expressed in these Words, *The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the Name of the Lord!*

5. I pray you, lay it down for a Maxim, that Sin is, in its own Nature, just exactly the same abominable odious Thing, and not one whit the better, because God permits it to be, & because he intended, and because he will overrule it to Good. — And believe it firmly, & act upon it steadily, that there is not the least imaginable Reason

Lord! — But whence arises all this Difficulty? Not from any Fault in God, all whose Ways are wise, holy, just and good. It is really best, most for the Honour of God and Good of Mankind, that this apostate Race, who have rebelled against the great King of the Universe, turned their Backs upon the God that made them, and are Idolizing the good Things of this World, should be thus chastised, that they may know, that it is an evil and bitter Thing to despise the Lord, to forsake the Fountain of all Good, and be experimentally convinced that all Cisterns are broken Cisterns; and driven to an absolute Necessity to confess their Sin, humble themselves, forsake their Idols, and return to the only true & living God. But naturally we do not love to have our Hearts humbled, weaned from the World, and to have God for the alone Portion of our Souls. And as we do not like the Ends; so we cannot be pleased with the Means. Did we like the one, the other might appear full of Wisdom and Beauty. — If all the Dispensations of Providence were calculated to render us rich, honourable and happy, in the Fulness of all earthly good Things, no Reproach, no Sicknes, no Losses, no Troubles of any Kind, that this World might be our Heaven and our Home, this would suit such ungodly, proud, worldly Hearts as ours naturally are: and we could love such a God, and think well of all his Ways. — But alas, besides all our present Troubles, we are soon to die, leave this World we are so fond of, and to go and appear before our Judge, and receive according to our Deeds. This is still more Shocking. O how glad would many be, if there was no such Thing as Death, and no such Day as the Day of Judgment! — But above all, nothing is so dreadful as the eternal Torments of Hell. This shocks
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Reason to suspect the Wisdom of the whole, or of any Part of the Divine Conduct ; because we cannot see what good Ends he can have in View. — The Truth of both which Observations has been at large illustrated already.

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Thousands & Millions, and tempts them to call in Question all the Divine Perfections. — Especially, when all this is threatened in God's Law, for the first Transgression, for the least Sin. (*Gal. iii. 10.*)

Now, if it is as difficult, to bring our 'Hearts to be reconciled to all this, as to God's permitting Sin ; altho' in all these Particulars we must own God's Conduct is wise, holy, just and good, or give up the whole of Divine Revelation at once ; have we not great Reason to think that there is something amiss in our own Hearts ? Some general Cause, which produces all these Effects ? — And if we are indeed natively Enemies to God in the Temper of our Minds, as the Scriptures teach, it is not strange that we should feel a general Dislike to all his Ways. If we are blind to his Glory, and regardless of his Honour, and unconcerned about the spiritual Good of the System, the best Good of God's holy and eternal Kingdom ; and attached only to our own particular, unholy and merely carnal Interests, it is not strange that we should dislike the Divine Conduct towards the intellectual System, as much as the Israelites in the Wilderness did God's Conduct towards them. (*Rom. viii. 5—11.*) For altho, in the whole, greater Glory may be brought to God, and greater spiritual Good to the System ; yet if our Hearts naturally are not suited with God's Ends, neither will they be with his Means : And so his whole Plan, in Stead of appearing perfect in Wisdom, Glory and Beauty, may look as dark and gloomy to us, as did the Divine Dispensations to Israel of old. — On the whole, I think we have infinitely more Reason to believe, that the Fault is in us, than in God : and that it much better becomes us to suspect our own Hearts, than to "doubt whether God does what is most for his own Glory." See these Sentiments more enlarged upon in my Sermons. (p. 115—121, 192.)

Is it not Pride, my Brother, unsufferable Pride, in us, poor contemptible Worms, to get up into the Judgment-Seat, call Almighty God to our Bar, examine his Conduct, and then boldly pronounce it bad? And publickly tell the World, that he has not done that "which is most for his own Glory"? And all, because we cannot see the Reasons of his Conduct; altho we know at the same time, that our Views are so contracted, that we are no proper Judges; and that is impossible we should prove his present Plan not to be the best?—Yea, to be so engaged to slur our Maker's Conduct, as to be vexed with a fellow-Worm, who thinks it impossible God should act unwisely, and would therefore speak in behalf of the injured Majesty of Heaven, and plead his Cause, and endeavour to justify his Ways to Men? And with Indignation to cry out, "You have no Right to be so *violently confident*, that the present Scheme is most for God's Glory and the Good of the moral System;" — "I can offer Reasons sufficient to balance your's, and make the contrary appear highly probable!" (p. 5, 6.) For I think, I can prove "that in Fact, God does not do what is most for his own Glory": And it is "a mere Fallacy" to pretend that he "is obliged to!" (p. 12, 13.)

I PRAY you, Sir, Give up this impious blasphemous Principle, that "God does not do what is most for his Glory." And if you think it Condescension, pray condescend, at least, so far as to believe that God knows better than you do; and is infinitely more concerned, than you ever was, to do as well as he knows how. — You would think it an intolerable Reflection, if all your Acquaintance should join to give you this Character, *viz.* that in your daily Conduct, and even in the most important Affairs, you do not make Conscience of acting according to your best Judgment.—O, blush, be ashamed, and be confounded, and never open your Mouth to justify the impious Reflection,

Reflection, you have, in the Sight of all the Country, cast upon the Character of the *holy One of Israel*. Lest, if you allow your self, Pharaoh-like, to oppose your Maker, you, in the End, meet the same dreadful Fate.

RATHER, let us seek Divine Grace, from the God of all Grace, that our Hearts may be prepared to approve and love the Works and Ways of God, that when they shall in the next World more fully open to our View, we may be ready to join the General Assembly of Heaven, and cry, "AMEN, HALLELUJAH!" ---- O, let us get an Heart to love his Law, and to love the Gospel of his Son; and heartily approve the daily Dispensations of his Providence; all which, analogous to the whole of his universal Plan, are calculated to exalt God, and humble the Creature. And if we can but be heartily reconciled to those Parts of the Divine Government, which are more near to our View; we shall be prepared heartily to approve of those Parts, which are more remote; yea, and of the whole.—For it is all of a Piece.

WHEN a Sinner is at first savingly converted, he sees but a very small Part of God's universal Plan of Government; but what he sees, he heartily approves and loves. And so he begins to be habitually prepared to approve and love the whole. — He grows up into this Divine Temper. — At the Day of Judgment this Divine Temper will be perfect.—And so then he will be perfectly prepared to approve, admire, and with all his Heart love and delight in God's universal Plan; which then will be opened to the View of the intellectual System. But those, who when on Earth, had not the least Disposition to approve and love any Part of God's moral Government, rightly understood, but were Enemies to God,
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to his Law; and Gospel, and common Dispensations of his Providence towards Mankind in this World, will, when the whole of God's universal Plan is opened to View, feel no Approbation; but rather their Enmity against God, and all his Ways, will break out, and rage to Perfection, to eternal Ages.

Wherefore,

6. and lastly, in Stead of indulging a quarelling, cavilling, disputatious Temper, and spending our precious Time in finding Fault with God's Ways; let us rather spend our leisure-hours, in reading God's holy Word, and in fervent Prayer for Divine Instruction.

It had been infinitely wiser for the Israelites in the Wilderness, to have spent their Time in Prayer to God, than in murmuring against him. Their Corruptions made them so blind, that they could not see; and then they laid all the Blame upon God. For which, God doom'd them to wander and fall in the Wilderness, and never reach the holy Land. — And they were *our Ensamples*; and these Things were *written for our Instruction*.---O, therefore, my Brother, let us in this benighted World, how dark soever things appear, not cavil against any of the Ways of God; but rather humbly cry to him for divine Grace, to enable us to believe, throughly to believe, that “supreme Wisdom cannot err;” And accordingly, “heartily to acquiesce in the Dispensations of supreme Wisdom; and humbly admire and adore, where we cannot fully comprehend;” in a firm Belief that all the Affairs of the Universe are by him conducted in such an infinitely perfect Manner, as that when “full Day shall be poured on all the Ways and Works of God,” they will appear in such a Light as to bring the greatest Glory to God, and Good to the System; and
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so fill all holy Beings with "unspeakable Joy," and the most exalted Thoughts of God. And even be a Source of eternal Instruction, and Means of the swiftest Progress in Humility, Holiness and Happiness, in the intellectual System for ever and ever.---While all join in eternal Praises to the infinitely wise God, *of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all Things : To whom be Glory for ever. Amen.*

F I N I S.



77th Division in Germany 1945

For the 77th Division in Germany 1945, the following information is provided:

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